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**But Merc domination
sparks equalisation call**



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POLE POSITION

Performance balancing can't be the answer

SO WHERE WERE YOU, WILLIAMS, FERRARI, McLAREN and Red Bull? After last year's Mercedes walkover, it was hoped that things would be different this season. But Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg simply cantered into the distance in Melbourne.

Pre-season testing had made it clear this was going to happen. In fact, on the very first day, Rosberg's marathon stint in the new car underlined that Mercedes wasn't giving up its advantage any time soon. Credit to Mercedes. The objective of any sport is to win and it has done so, crushingly. The source of the problem lies not at Brackley or at Brixworth, but at the myriad other F1 facilities around the rest of the world that haven't done as good a job.

But needless to say, dominance is bad for business in F1. By that, I mean the main business of any sport: entertaining the fans. That doesn't necessarily mean that it's time for grand prix racing to throw itself down the slippery slope of performance balancing, since, very likely, that way madness lies.

But it is food for thought as F1 pushes on with its latest bid for reinvention in 2017. After all, rule changes tend to stretch out the field and stability tends to close it up. Consider yourself warned...



EDD STRAW EDITOR
 edd.straw@haymarket.com
 @eddstrawF1

COVER STORY

“Be honest. You finished 30 seconds ahead of us and you hope it's going to be closer [in Malaysia]? So you hope you slow down?”

Sebastian Vettel to Nico Rosberg, p14



FIND US ON



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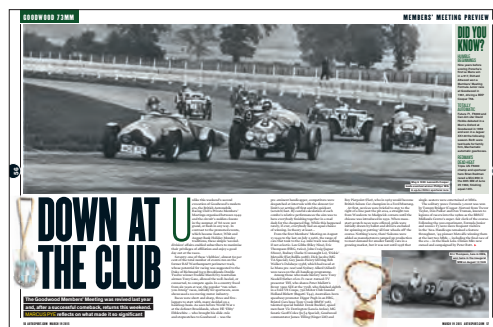
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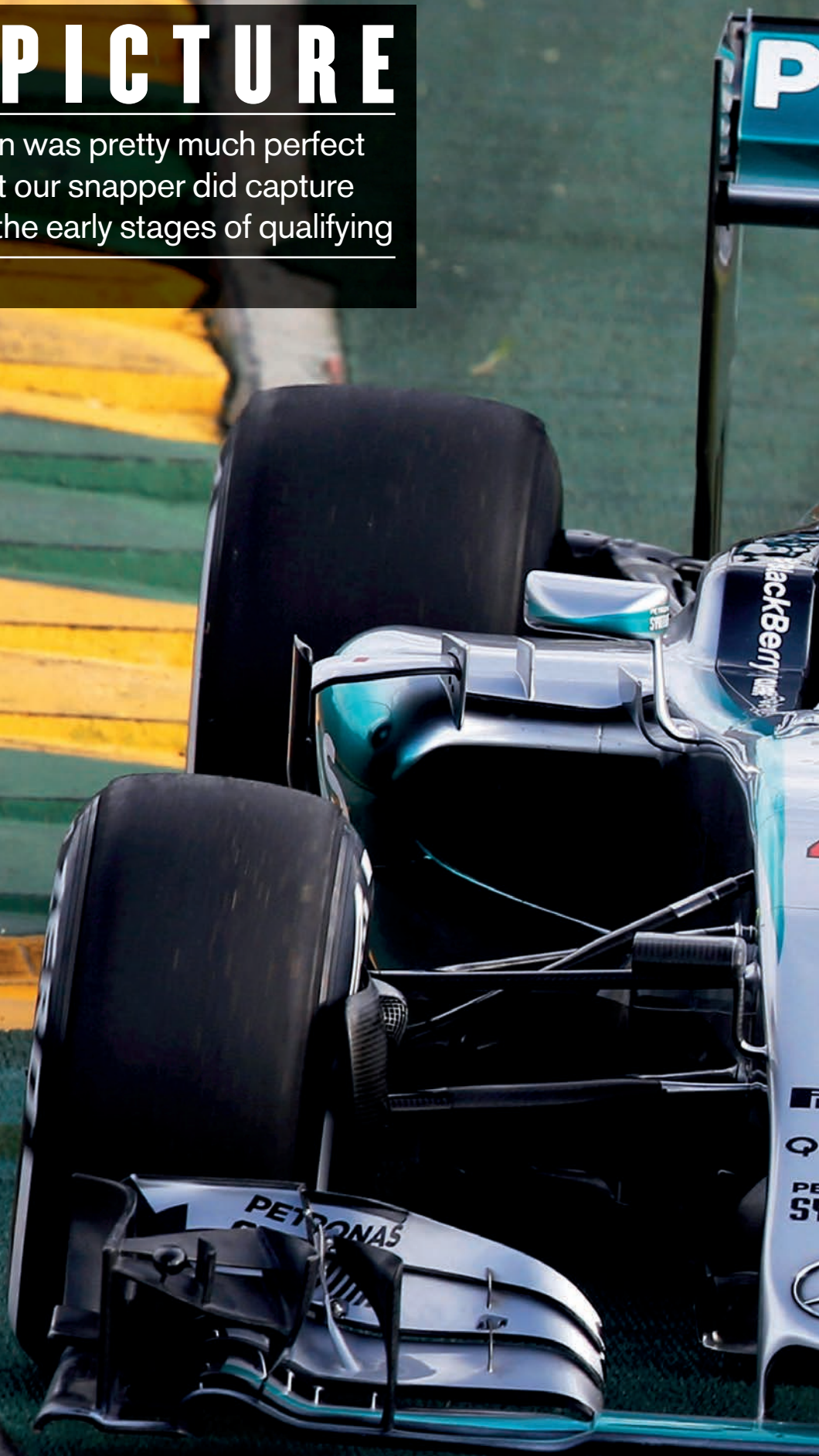
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THE BIG PICTURE

World champion Lewis Hamilton was pretty much perfect at the Australian Grand Prix. But our snapper did capture this rallycrossing moment from the early stages of qualifying

Photographer Coates/LAT





This week in F1

RED BULL THREATENS TO QUIT F1

Red Bull is set to make a decision this summer on whether or not to continue in Formula 1 amid ongoing frustration over its form.

A combination of complete dominance by Mercedes, allied to Red Bull's frustrations with engine supplier Renault, has prompted it to speak openly about turning its back on F1.

Red Bull motorsport advisor Helmut Marko told media in Australia: "We will evaluate the situation again, as every year, and look into costs and revenue. If we are totally dissatisfied we could contemplate an F1 exit. Yes, the danger is there that Mr Mateschitz [Red Bull boss Dietrich] loses his passion for F1."

Any exit would involve Red Bull

selling its two F1 teams, rather than shutting them down entirely. Toro Rosso is in talks with Renault about a closer relationship, while rumours circulate that Red Bull could be sold to Audi.

Marko added: "We might sell STR, but we do not have to. But even if Renault takes over STR we will have a cooperation."

A designer like Adrian [Newey] is castrated by this engine formula. These rules will kill the sport

Helmut Marko



BLOXHAM/LAT

6

Windtunnel ban would slash costs, says Horner

Red Bull team principal Christian Horner has called on Formula 1 to consider a total ban on windtunnel use.

As part of efforts to reduce costs and improve the spectacle, he believes that a complete rethink of the way F1 cars are designed should be evaluated at an executive level.

"If you wanted to go really extreme and be really controversial, get rid of the windtunnel," Horner told AUTOSPORT.

"It's an expensive thing to run and to feed with components and parts. Get

back to engineering ingenuity."

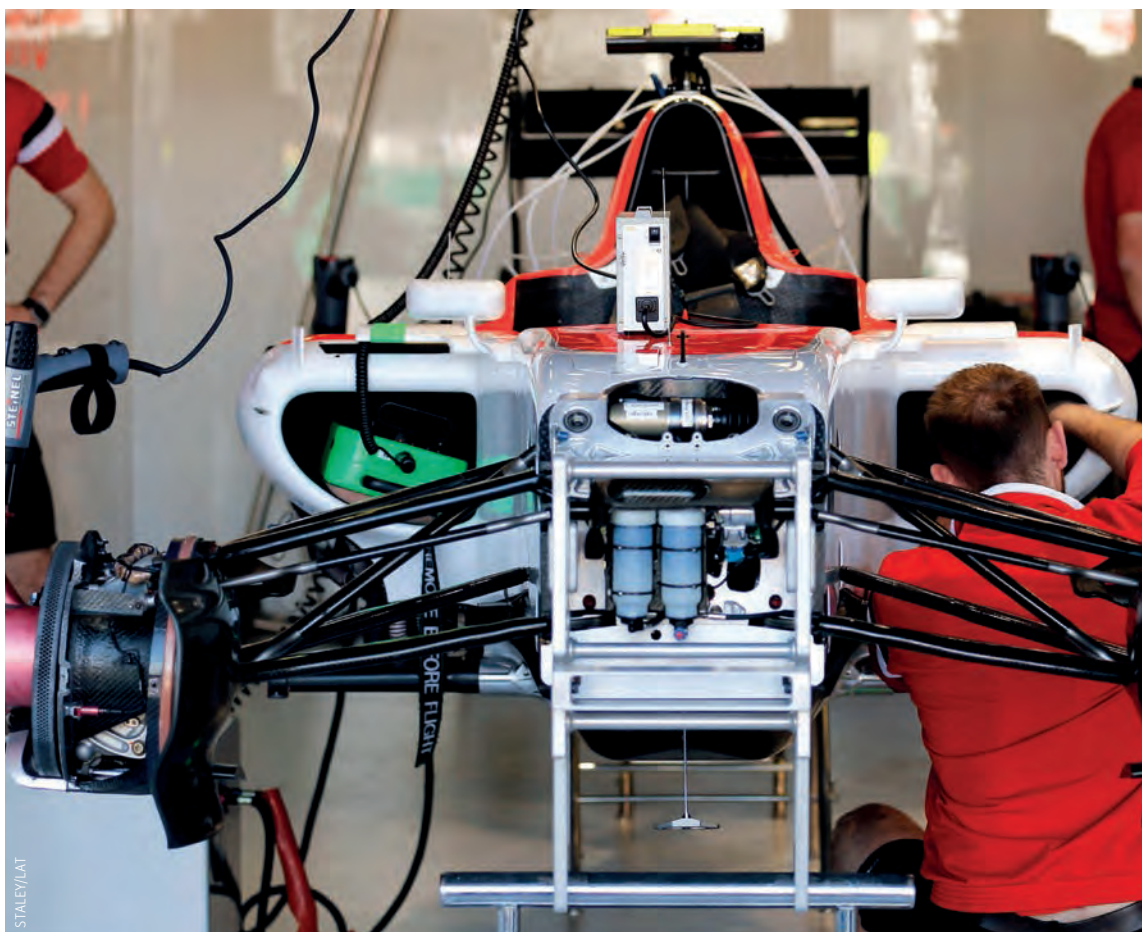
But this notion did not attract much support from rivals. Mercedes motorsport boss Toto Wolff said: "It's interesting who comes up with these ideas. I wouldn't attribute too much attention to that."

"I still think it was a joke. Windtunnels are an integral part of Formula 1 today. They are an integral part of any road-car business. By not using the windtunnel, how do you want to put the car on the track without having measured it?"



THOMPSON/GETTY

For all the breaking news, visit **AUTOSPORT.COM**



REMEMBER WHEN



San Marino Grand Prix

The non-qualification of Manor, the absence of Valtteri Bottas and pre-grid car failures for Kevin Magnussen and Daniil Kvyat meant there were only 15 starters for the Australian Grand Prix. Aside from the 2005 US GP, it was the smallest grid since the 1982 San Marino GP, which had been hit by a FOCA boycott. Only 14 cars started, and six finished – before Manfred Winkelhock was disqualified.

BIG NUMBER

1989

Marcus Ericsson's points in Australia were the first scored by a Swedish driver in F1 since Stefan Johansson finished third in the 1989 Portuguese Grand Prix.

Computer says no to Manor's GP comeback

Manor's return to the grid was derailed last weekend by software problems.

The resurrected Marussia team could not fire up its Ferrari-powered cars because the software had been wiped by administrators as part of a planned sell-off.

Manor's failure to turn a wheel prompted an FIA investigation, but the team escaped a penalty when it showed it had done all it could to try to resolve its issues.

The team hopes that a solution can be found by the next race in Malaysia,

and insisted there were no regrets in travelling to Australia.

Sporting director Graeme Lowdon said: "It's very important to be here. This is the championship that we're part of and we want to be part of it from the start to the finish."

Bottas hopeful for Malaysia

Valtteri Bottas is confident that he will be fit to race in Malaysia after being forced out of the Australian Grand Prix with a back problem (see page 26).

Having rested since Melbourne, all the indications point towards Bottas being well enough to return at Sepang.

"I have two weeks until the next race to receive further treatment to ensure I will be back to full fitness," he said.

Should he not be ready, Williams could face a dilemma over who to replace him with, because the team does not have an official reserve driver.

Susie Wolff is its test driver and Alex Lynn its development driver, but both lack experience and the team could seek someone with more race knowledge.



NASR BEATS BRAZIL GREATS

Felipe Nasr's fifth-place finish in Australia may not have been as good as rookie Kevin Magnussen's debut podium 12 months ago, but it was still historically significant.

After a weekend for Sauber that was overshadowed by the Giedo van der Garde court proceedings, Nasr's result stood out as better than those achieved by Brazil's Formula 1 champions on their debuts.

Here is how they fared:

-  **AYRTON SENNA**
1984 BRAZILIAN GP **DNF**
-  **EMERSON FITTIPALDI**
1970 BRITISH GP **8TH**
-  **NELSON PIQUET**
1978 GERMAN GP **DNF**





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Ben Anderson

From the paddock

Demands from the likes of Red Bull for 'performance equalisation' call into question the basic racing philosophy of Formula 1

So the second season of V6-hybrid-turbo Formula 1 is under way, and already there are complaints that Mercedes is too far ahead and the competitive advantage it has spent so much time, energy and money accruing is now so great that it's damaging the sport.

Leading the charge was Red Bull boss Christian Horner, whose star driver Daniel Ricciardo (a three-time winner last season) finished a lapped sixth as Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg collected yet another one-two finish for the Brackley/Brixworth/Stuttgart alliance.

Mercedes won at a canter, Ferrari and Williams were nowhere near, Red Bull has slipped back because its Renault engine is even less effective (relative to the opposition) than last year, and McLaren-Honda? Well, the less said about that situation the better...

Horner called on the FIA to intervene and use an "equalisation mechanism" to close up the competitive order. "You will need to look closely within the rules but it certainly exists if one manufacturer is out of kilter," he told reporters after the race. "The FIA within the rules have an equalisation mechanism. I think that's perhaps something they need to look at."

Though not explicit in the regulations, there existed an 'unofficial' equivalency agreement between the various engine manufacturers during the latter phase of Formula 1's previous V8-engined era. F1's key stakeholders basically agreed between them that no one engine should be more than a couple of per cent

attempting to improve complicated technology that nobody fully understands yet, rather than settled into the situation they found themselves in under the previous regime, where pretty much everyone had everything figured out. The result is that the field is rather spread out at the moment.

McLaren racing director Eric Boullier estimates that it will take two years for his team to catch Mercedes, because of the complexity and immaturity of the technology in the cars. But he is convinced the rest of the grid *will* catch up eventually. The key question, then, is whether F1 can afford to wait that long. According to some inside the paddock, the answer is 'absolutely not'.

The question of whether F1 should employ some explicit equalisation to close up the competitive spread is an interesting philosophical one for the sport. Certainly, it's difficult to argue that the racing in the latter stages of the V8 era wasn't more competitive than what we're seeing today. But from a pure competitor's point of view, pegging back the opposition (provided they are doing nothing illegal that should be pegged back) is a cop-out. It should be down to the opposition to do a better job.

From an entertainment perspective, of course closer competition would be better, but the danger of achieving it by heavy-handed technical intervention is that you risk alienating your core fans in pursuit of the fickle 'floating voter'. After all, not every grand prix can be a thrill-a-minute classic.

"It's difficult to argue that the racing in the latter stages of the V8 era wasn't more competitive"

better than any other, thereby ensuring no one gained a significant edge. Officially speaking, specifications were frozen, with alterations only permitted on grounds of safety, reliability or cost (with a requirement to fully disclose the exact details of any proposed changes to all other manufacturers and the FIA).

Of course, the very same manufacturers designed and built engines for the current V6 formula under the same 'frozen' regulations, so you'd presume the aforementioned private arrangement is no longer in place, given that one particular engine was clearly better than the rest in 2014.

Complicating matters further now is the engine 'unfreeze', which allows manufacturers to develop using a pre-defined token system, and the subsequent rules loophole identified by Ferrari over the winter, which means they are now permitted to 'spend' these tokens whenever they wish, rather than before a deadline.

The upshot is that F1's engine manufacturers are currently in proper competition with each other,

One theory is that F1 should go radical and embrace the balance of performance rules that govern GT racing. This is arguably the only branch of the sport that is thriving in terms of manufacturer interest, because they all know (provided the balancing is done correctly) that they have an even chance of success. This would encourage more companies to come in to F1.

The downside is that this doesn't encourage true competition or excellence, something both Williams performance chief Rob Smedley and Mercedes boss Toto Wolff were keen to point out is what F1 is "all about".

"If you come into F1 and you try to perform at the highest level and equalisation is what you need after the first race and you cry out, that's not how we have done things in the past," Wolff argues. "It's always a political season; it was last year and it will be this year. I just think, 'Get your head down, work hard and sort it out.'"

If you're a pure competitor of the sort F1 has always been populated by, it's difficult to disagree with him. ❧

This week in motorsport

➔ P36 AUDI'S LE MANS PUSH

LATEST AUDI R8 HITS THE NORDSCHLEIFE

The second-generation Audi R8 LMS GT3 racer, unveiled at the Geneva Motor Show earlier this month, made its first public track appearance at the VLN long-distance series test on the Nurburgring Nordschleife last week. The car makes its race debut in the VLN opener at the 'Ring on March 28.



10



Motorbase sits out start of year

Race-winning British Touring Car Championship team Motorbase Performance will miss at least the first half of this season due to budget issues.

The Kent-based squad lost title sponsor Airwaves at the end of last year and has struggled to replace that funding.

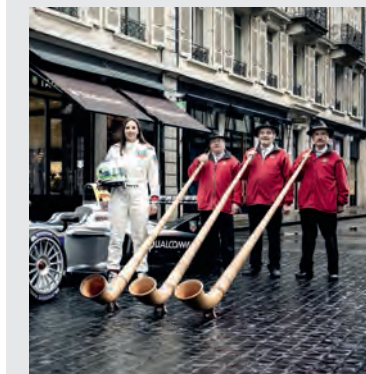
Motorbase has signed Mat Jackson and James Cole to race its two Ford Focuses from Snetterton in August, depending on whether it is allowed to keep its two TOCA BTCC Licences. Alex Martin keeps his seat, with his entry now being run by Team Parker Racing.

● Marc Hynes has been forced to postpone his second year in the BTCC due to his work with the Manor Formula 1 team. The 1999 British Formula 3 champion made his series debut last season in a Triple Eight-run MG.



First picture: Honda's new BTCC car

Honda's new BTCC contender broke cover at Brands Hatch on Tuesday. The Civic Sport replaces last year's Tourer, and both Gordon Shedden and Matt Neal were on hand to add mileage to the Dynamics-run car.



Racing set for Swiss return

Formula E could race in Geneva in 2016-17 after a relaxation on Switzerland's ban on racing in the wake of the 1955 Le Mans disaster.

Simona de Silvestro (left) has already demoed an FE car in the city.

De Silvestro makes her return to IndyCar action in the St Petersburg opener after securing a one-off ride with Andretti Autosport.

ESM GOES FOR LIGIER

Extreme Speed Motorsports has shelved its new HPD coupe and is buying two Ligiers for its attack on the LMP2 class of this year's World Endurance Championship.

The decision means that ESM will revert to the open-top HPD ARX-03bs that it has raced in the US for the past two seasons at the Silverstone WEC opener on April 12. The Ligier JSP2s, which will be powered by the HPD Honda V6 twin-turbo, are due to be ready for round two at Spa in May.

ESM and Honda Performance Development have decided that the new-for-2015 HPD ARC-04b (below), which made its debut in January's Daytona 24 Hours, needs further development before it is homologated for the WEC. ESM will also race its ARX-03bs in this weekend's Sebring 12 Hours, before shipping them to Paul Ricard for the official WEC test.



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Frijns close to WRT GT break

Ex-Caterham Formula 1 test driver Robin Frijns is closing on a switch to sportscar racing this season with the WRT Audi team in the Blancpain GT Series.

Frijns, who won the Formula Renault 3.5 title in 2012, tried one of WRT's fleet of Audi R8 LMS ultras during the official Blancpain Endurance Series test at Paul Ricard last week.

WRT boss Vincent Vosse is now working with the Dutchman to bring him into the squad for the Blancpain Endurance Series and, less likely, the Blancpain Sprint Series.

REMEMBER WHEN



Robin Frijns was viewed as the man most likely to become a future Formula 1 star when he stormed through the junior ranks. He won FBMW, FRenault 2.0 and FRenault 3.5 titles and tested with Sauber (above), Red Bull and Caterham, but never got a break at the top level.

STANAWAY HEADS GP2 TEST

Richie Stanaway gave Status Grand Prix a boost ahead of its first GP2 Series campaign by setting the fastest time of last week's three-day Abu Dhabi test.

The New Zealander won races with Status in GP3 last season and has not yet been confirmed in a race seat for GP2 for 2015, but topped the final morning.

Each of the six sessions was headed by a different driver, with Alexander Rossi (Racing Engineering) and Pierre Gasly (DAMS) leading the way on the opening day, before Alex Lynn (DAMS) and Norman Nato (Arden) took turns on the second. Rapax runner Sergey Sirotkin was fastest on the final afternoon.

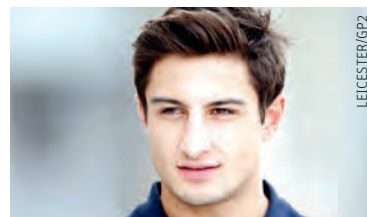


DTM reveals new tweaks

DTM organisers have released further details about the double-header format being reintroducing for 2015.

The new Saturday race will last for 40 minutes plus one lap, with pitstops to change tyres optional in a bid to add a strategic variable. Sunday's longer race, 60 minutes plus one lap, will include one compulsory pitstop.

Both contests will be worth equal points, with grids set by standalone, 20-minute qualifying sessions.



Evans joins Jota at Le Mans

GP2 driver Mitch Evans will contest the Le Mans 24 Hours with Jota Sport.

The New Zealander will take the place of Audi driver Filipe Albuquerque in Jota's Gibson-Nissan O15S LMP2 car at the Spa World Endurance Championship round in May and then Le Mans.

Evans, who is mentored by Porsche LMP1 driver Mark Webber, will share the car with Nick Yelloly and Simon Dolan.

BERNSTORFF JOINS ARDEN

Anglo-Danish racer Emil Bernstorff has switched to Arden International for his second season in the GP3 Series.

The 21-year-old tested with the team in Abu Dhabi in late 2013 before joining Carlin for his rookie GP3 campaign, in which he was a race winner.

Carlin's final seat has yet to be filled, but Nissan protege Jann Mardenborough – who raced with Arden last year – is at the wheel in this week's Estoril test alongside the team's Antonio Fuoco and Mitch Gilbert.

Bernstorff (right) is one of a raft of GP3 signings in recent days, with Norwegian Pal Varhaug – winner of the very first race for the category in



2010 – staying on board with Jenzer Motorsport for another season.

Meanwhile, Oscar Tunjo, who recently stood down from his Pons Racing drive in the Formula Renault 3.5 season, has joined GP3, the Colombian lining up with Italian team Trident.

Quaife-Hobbs in McLaren

Former GP2 driver Adrian Quaife-Hobbs will make a full-time switch to sportscars for 2015 with VonRyan Racing in the Blancpain Endurance Series.

The 24-year-old Briton, who won the Auto GP title in 2012, will race a McLaren 650S GT3 as the only non-factory driver in VonRyan's six-man line-up.



In brief



STRAKKA'S STRIPES

Strakka Racing has unveiled the livery in which its Nissan-engined Strakka Dome S103 LMP2 contender will race in this year's World Endurance Championship in the hands of Danny Watts, Jonny Kane and Nick Leventis.

LIUZZI IN LMP1 DEAL

Former grand prix driver Vitantonio Liuzzi will return to the ByKolles prototype squad for its LMP1 assault on this year's WEC. The Italian, who drove for the team in LMP2 when it competed under the Lotus banner in 2012-13, will drive the German squad's updated AER-engined CLM P1/O1 around his commitments in the GT Asia Series.

GENE TOPS TCR INFLUX

Ex-SEAT WTCC racer Jordi Gene returns to the marque in the new TCR International series, which kicks off in support of next week's Malaysian Grand Prix. Gene joins fellow Spaniard Pepe Oriola and Russian Sergey Afanasiev in the Craft-Bamboo team. Other notable recent recruits for TCR include the Target Competition line-up of sportscar ace Andrea Belicchi, WTCC refugee Michel Nykjaer and ex-Megane Eurocup champion Stefano Comini.

BULLER FOR JAPAN...

Single-seater racer Will Buller is moving to Japan this year to race in the Super Formula series. The Northern Irishman joins Brit James Rossiter at Kondo Racing.

...AND SO IS ASMER

Ex-BMW Sauber F1 test driver Marko Asmer is also going to Japan. The Estonian, 2007 British F3 champion, is to race in Super GT's GT300 class with a Bandoh-run Toyota.

NISSAN DELAY

News broke as AUTOSPORT closed for press on Tuesday that Nissan will skip the opening rounds of the World Endurance Championship to focus on getting its LMP1 GTR-LM ready to make its debut at Le Mans in June.



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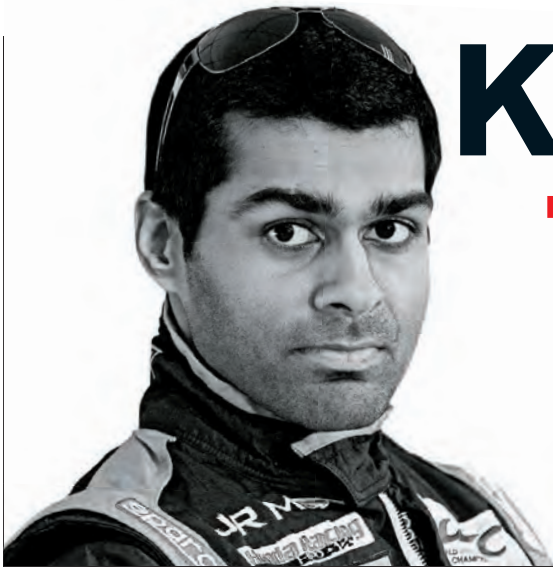
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Artiste line-up subject to change



Karun Chandhok

The racer's eye

The first race of 2015 wasn't a great one, by most standards, but there were some fine performances, especially among the rookies

Even the most ardent Formula 1 fans would agree that the Australian Grand Prix wasn't the most exciting season opener we've ever seen. A small grid that got further reduced while the cars were attempting to make it to the grid certainly didn't get things off on the right foot.

But once the lights went out there were some really impressive drives that stood out.

A year ago, I wrote a column for AUTOSPORT about the young stars who excelled, with Daniel Ricciardo, Kevin Magnussen and Valtteri Bottas coming to the fore in Melbourne. Twelve months on, all three are established F1 drivers (I still believe Magnussen will be back racing full time soon) and there's a new crop of rookies who had a chance to make their mark.

Felipe Nasr was the real standout performer of that group. I was never sure what to make of Nasr in GP2 as he looked quick but never blow-your-doors-off outstanding in a way I recall someone like Nico Hulkenberg being back in 2009. In Melbourne however, despite being the rookie in the Sauber team, he looked more convincing than Marcus Ericsson. Even at the Barcelona test I went to earlier this year, he already looked like the team leader.

The well-documented Giedo van der Garde case must have been a huge distraction for the Brazilian as well as his team-mate Ericsson. But when they got going, Nasr looked the part on track.



Nasr made a strong impression on his F1 debut with Sauber

THOMPSON/GETTY

attention and hype around Verstappen, but he did exactly what needs to be done to cement his reputation – be the top Toro Rosso driver on track.

Max admitted he didn't quite put the lap together in Q2 and Sainz shaded him by a crucial two tenths when it counted to get into Q3 and then qualify within a couple tenths of Ricciardo.

Despite a big delay in the pitstop, Sainz recovered well to score points on his debut. He would've been a bit disappointed to lose a place to Ericsson so close to home but overall a very good first race, I thought.

Verstappen also looked on course for a handful of points. I still think that the teenager is driving within his limits and has made a conscious decision – rightly so in my opinion – to rack up the results without making any

“Nasr was the standout performer of the crop of rookies who had a chance to make a mark”

Sauber has done a very good job of building a solid, reliable and relatively easy-to-drive car to try to rack up some good mileage in winter testing and get the drivers in a position to capitalise on other people's misfortune to score some early points.

This was a tried-and-tested Sauber policy back in the late 1990s and early 2000s. It's nice to see the team benefit from that after a torrid 2014.

Nasr looked good all through the weekend. I thought he was smart and opportunistic at the start and after the early safety-car period, which allowed him to gain six places relatively quickly. Once he was there, it would have been easy to make a mistake under pressure when you have a train comprising people including Ricciardo and Kimi Raikkonen. But he looked calm and indeed pulled away from the Red Bull towards the end to score a great debut result.

Carlos Sainz Jr and Max Verstappen also did a good job. It's been a tricky winter for Carlos because of all the

mistakes in these early races.

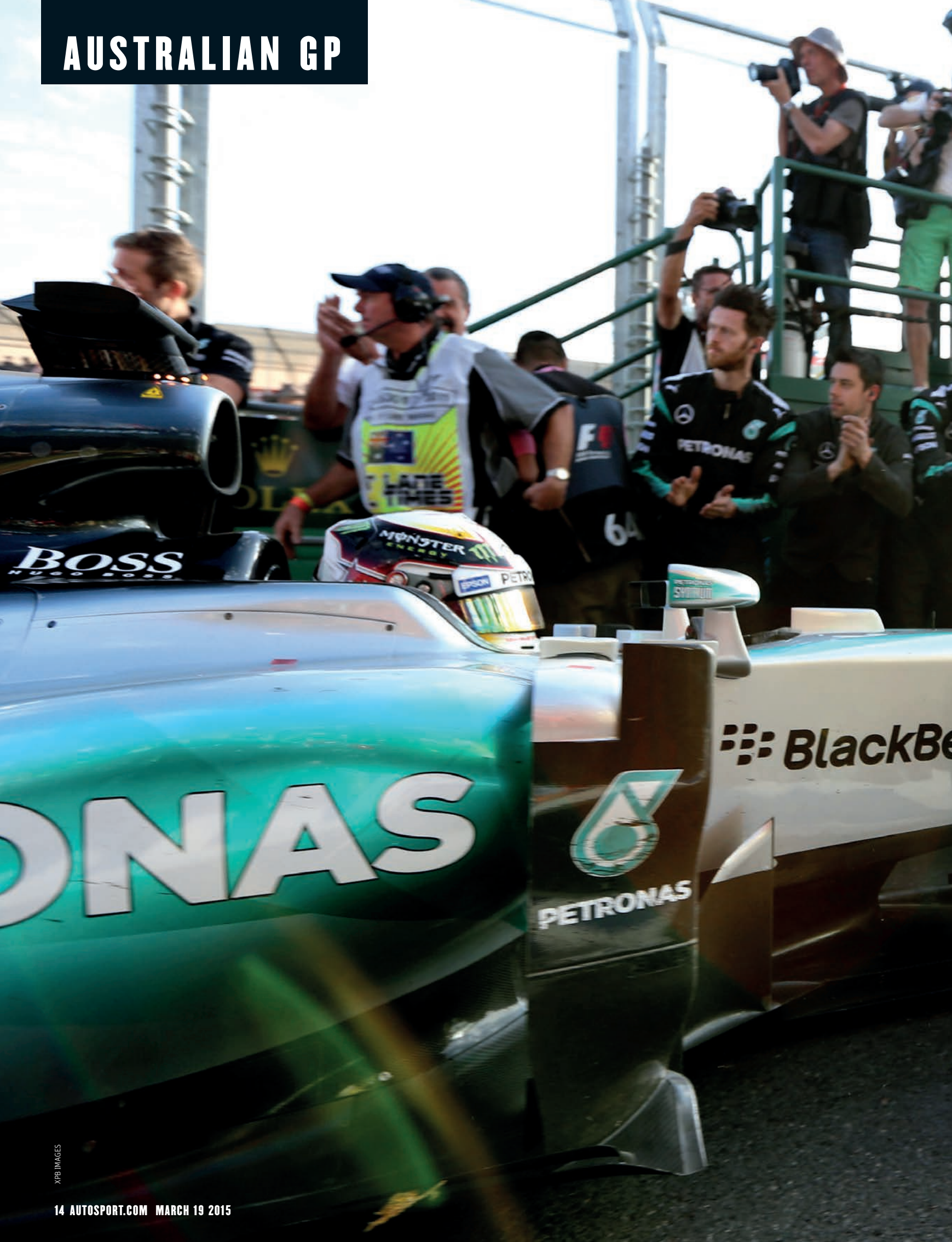
It must be hard to be a 17-year-old with the world's eyes on you, waiting for you to make a mistake. Max's maturity thus far has been very impressive to see. Once he gets a few race finishes under his belt and his confidence grows I would love to see his full potential.

Melbourne isn't always the best indicator of things to come but even so, it does look like the pecking order is Mercedes, Ferrari and Williams at the front. Both Sebastian Vettel and Raikkonen come into 2015 off the back of poor seasons last year but both drivers looked much happier last weekend than at any point last year.

Although there's a mountain to climb, for the sake of Formula 1 it would be great to see if the Scuderia can build up to become a genuine Mercedes challenger for race wins towards the end of the season.

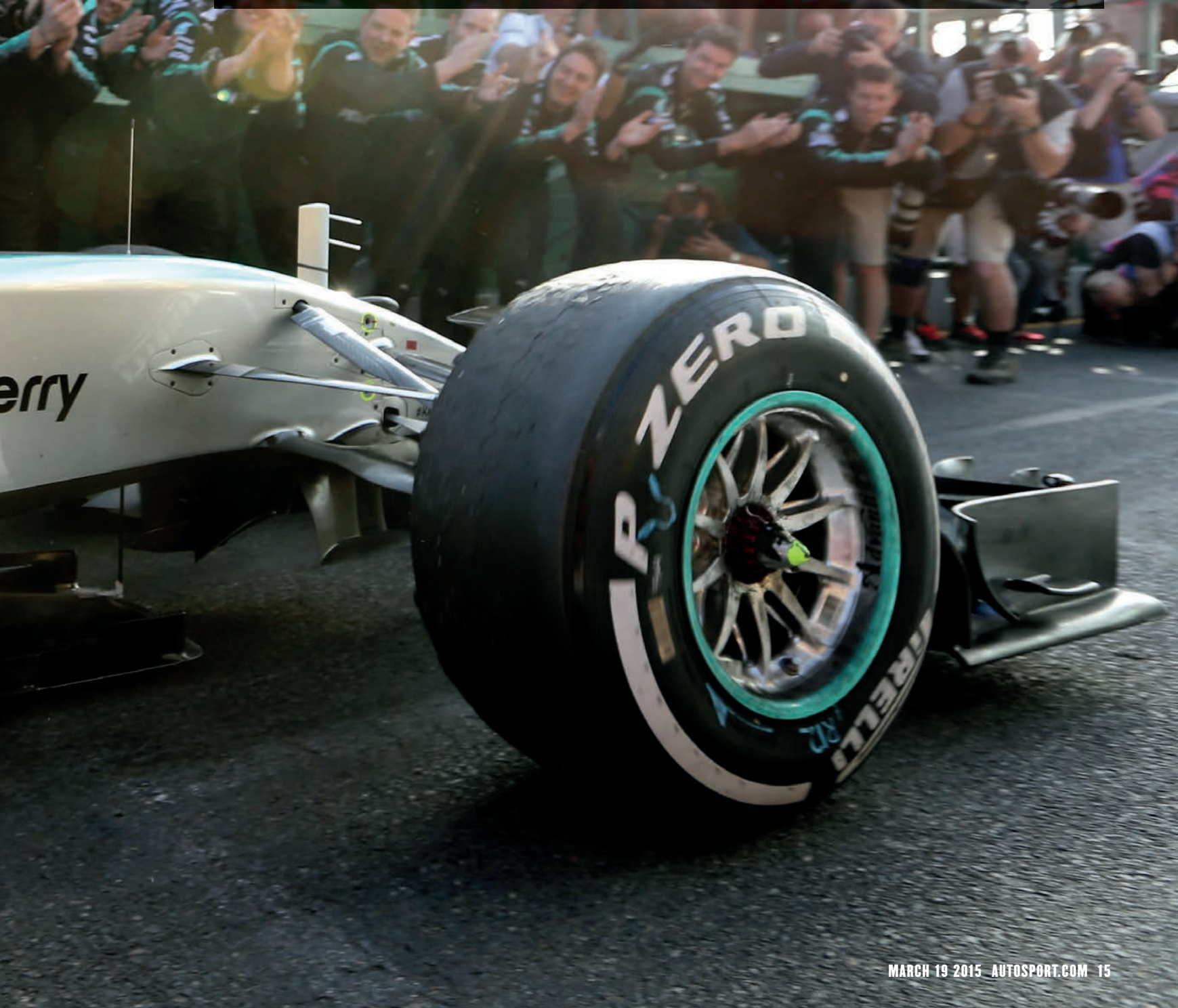
Bottas's injury will be a real concern for Williams as it's come when there's no real gap to recover fully, but at least the car looks like a reasonable base once again. ❧

AUSTRALIAN GP



CHAMPION BACK OUT AND FIGHTING

World champion Lewis Hamilton made the perfect start to his title defence with pole, victory and fastest lap for Mercedes in Australia. **BEN ANDERSON** reports from Melbourne's Albert Park



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Only 15 cars made the grid at Albert Park



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➤ Only 15 cars taking the start (and 11 finishing), utter domination by one team, plus a terrible first chapter in the reunion of one of the most powerful and famous car/engine combinations in Formula 1 history. This was not the competitive, combative beginning to 2015 that F1 fans were hoping for.

After the final race of 2014, where Lewis Hamilton clinched his second world title to cap a season of total Mercedes dominance, the fact that Felipe Massa's Williams had come within 2.576s of denying Hamilton the 33rd grand prix victory of his career offered a glimmer of hope that the next campaign might, possibly, be different. At Albert Park those hopes came to nothing.

Any expectations that Williams – the Mercedes customer team that came closest to denying the works squad in a fair fight in 2014 – might put its engine partner under more pressure this year were dashed. Massa finished a distant fourth, as Hamilton

led Nico Rosberg across the line to record Mercedes' 12th one-two finish in 20 consecutive races.

Sebastian Vettel's podium on his Ferrari debut suggested the beginning of a revival for the Scuderia, but the gains made in Maranello over the winter have only lifted it slightly ahead of Williams in the race to be best of the rest. The net gain compared with Mercedes is marginal – just a little over two tenths per lap over the course of this year's race compared with last year's (adjusted for the safety car periods that affected both events), from an original deficit of around eight tenths.

For Williams there is no like-for-like comparison, since Valtteri Bottas compromised his 2014 event by striking a wall, but the team certainly doesn't look as strong at the start of this season as it did at the end of the last. Although Massa felt poor timing of his only pitstop cost him crucial ground in a very close fight with Vettel, the team said tyre degradation gave it no other option.

So Mercedes' most likely challenger has slipped back, the only other full works team has narrowly hauled itself into a distant second spot, while the team that most closely challenged Mercedes across the balance of last year – Red Bull – has plummeted into the chasing pack and is now threatening to quit the sport.

Daniel Ricciardo finished a combative sixth at his home grand prix, after a weekend beset by various

technical problems, but both the Mercedes drivers lapped him. At least he got to keep this result, unlike the second place he lost in 2014 thanks to a fuel-flow irregularity. But, most worryingly for Red Bull-Renault, it has fallen back substantially on pure pace this year, to the tune of almost 1.3s per lap if you compare this race with last season's opener.

Meanwhile, the team that eventually claimed both minor



Perez had a scrappy race to points finish

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Wide Raikkonen would lead to disaster for Maldonado (left)



► podium places in Melbourne 2014 – McLaren – began its new era as a works partner to Honda as the slowest team on the grid (with Manor not running). Jenson Button was the last of the classified finishers – a twice-lapped and point-less 11th.

By switching from a supply of customer Mercedes engines to immature Honda technology for 2015, McLaren has fallen away by a massive three seconds per lap comparing this race with last year's.

Here you have four of the most successful teams in the history of the sport, and all of them are nowhere near challenging Mercedes for victory. This led Red Bull team principal Christian Horner to suggest F1's rulemakers need to act, or suffer the consequences of further declining interest in the sport, while the team's motorsport advisor Helmut Marko even went so far as to suggest Red Bull could quit the sport altogether if nothing is done.

"The FIA have a torque sensor on every engine, they can see what every

Horner: "The FIA have the facts – they could come up with some form of equalisation"

power unit is producing, and they have the facts – they could quite easily come up with some form of equalisation," argued Horner.

"When we were winning, and we were never winning to the advantage Mercedes had, I remember double diffusers were banned, exhausts were moved, flexible bodywork was prohibited, engine mapping was changed mid-season. Anything was done – and that wasn't unique to Red Bull – whether it was Williams in previous years, or McLaren.

"Take nothing away from Mercedes – they have done a super job. They have a good car, a fantastic engine, and they have two very good drivers. The problem is, the gap is so big that you

end up with three-tier racing, and that's not healthy for F1."

Trouble is, Horner is asking for something to be taken away from Mercedes (or given to the others) in order to close up the field. Given that he is in charge of a former world champion team, desperate to get back to winning ways, and struggling to cope with the limitations of a Renault engine he now estimates to be "probably 100bhp down on Mercedes", it's easy to see why.

But, whether or not the motives spring purely from self-interest, no one could argue that F1 wouldn't benefit from closer competition at the front. The prospect of a tighter fight between the two title protagonists already looks slim, thanks to Hamilton turning the tables on pole-position-trophy holder Rosberg in qualifying and converting that into a comfortable victory.

Sure, Rosberg stayed close – never more than 5s adrift and only 1.3s shy at the flag – but Hamilton had the advantage of track position and first

call on strategy (less critical here, since both cars could comfortably make the finish on one pitstop), and simply controlled the gap. Hamilton did most of his job on Saturday, set himself up nicely with a smart getaway (and an even smarter restart following the early safety-car period to recover Pastor Maldonado's crashed Lotus), and clinched the race by ensuring he extended a crucial advantage either side of his sole stop on lap 25 of 58.

There was no contest. And that's the point; F1 urgently needs a real contest in order to maintain genuine interest in the outcome of races. Curiously, Rosberg spoke of hope that Ferrari might be able to offer a genuine challenge to Mercedes this season, when questioned playfully by Vettel in the post-race press conference.

"I hope we can have a good fight [with Ferrari]," said Rosberg. "That would be awesome."

"Be honest," replied Vettel. "Do you really hope so? Seriously? You finished 30 seconds ahead of us and you hope it's going to be closer? So ►

Vettel snatched third place on Ferrari debut



DUNBAR/LAT

Red Bull home hero Ricciardo lacked pace



XPI IMAGES

Mercedes drivers were all smiles on the podium



► you hope you slow down – is that what you’re saying?”

“I hope that you can give us a challenge,” said Rosberg, “because it’s important for the sport and for the fans. And I do think about the show because I want to give people a great time watching on TV or at the track.”

So it seems even those dominating F1 are wary of their status – not just those who used to hold that position and now crave the chance to reclaim it.

“I would fear that interest will wane,” said Horner, when asked what is at stake if the current competitive order goes unchecked. “I didn’t see much of Mercedes on the television, because it’s not interesting watching a procession.”

“The producer was looking to pick out other battles in the race and there weren’t that many cars on there! The highlight for me was seeing Arnie on the podium.”

Horner’s quip about Arnold Schwarzenegger’s post-race officiation indicates a genuine fear that F1 is suffering from the sort of

predictability that so enraged fans during the latter stages of 2013, when Red Bull dominated. The irony of Horner calling on the FIA to equalise engine performance to alleviate that concern was not lost on him...

Of course it’s all too easy to forget that F1 grids have often become spread out after drastic technical changes are introduced, then close up again as everyone figures out the most effective way to go racing. This is a point McLaren racing director Eric Boullier was keen to stress, despite the fact that his team currently has the biggest deficit to make up.

“I think this engine technology still has a lot of potential to unlock, so it may take more than a couple of years to catch up,” he explained. “I don’t think this is bad for the sport. Everyone obviously wants to have all the cars racing together, but any technical change more than sporting change in the regulations is opening the door to gaps and loopholes.”

“This is the price you pay if you change the regulations as drastically

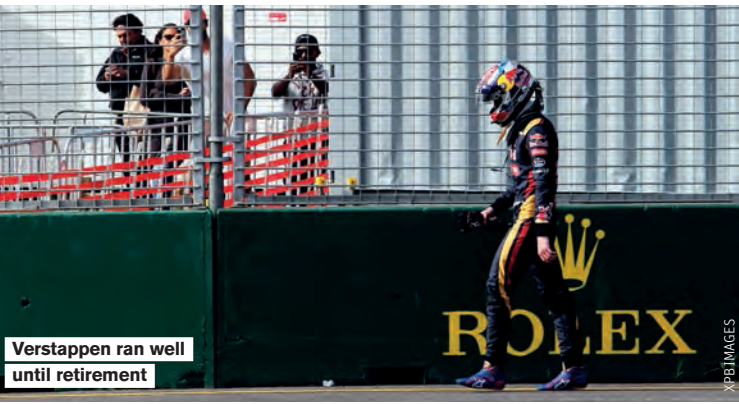
as they have been changed. You have to be patient. You have a good rivalry between both Mercedes drivers. The [other] teams will catch up.”

But will they? After the race Hamilton said there was “no need” to eke out more of a gap to Rosberg, suggesting he could have won by an even bigger margin. That’s a frightening prospect for the chasing pack and, if true, suggests the likes of Williams have a lot of work to do. But

the team’s performance chief Rob Smedley reckoned its deficit to Mercedes was exaggerated by the fact that the Albert Park street circuit doesn’t play to the FW37’s strengths.

“There’s no one area,” he said of Mercedes’ advantage. “They haven’t added a widget to their car to make it go 1.4s quicker. It’s just levels of excellence in all areas.”

“I don’t think it’s bad for the sport at all. Formula 1 is all about the levels



Verstappen ran well until retirement

XPI IMAGES



Wolff: "It's not as if we lapped the field. It's just the first race. Let's see what happens"

of excellence. They've done a fantastic job and I'm not going to moan because they're quicker than us."

So perhaps it's fair to say that those who are "moaning" should focus on improving their own game, without waiting for some kind of nebulous FIA handout to do their jobs for them. In fairness, Horner acknowledges the need for his team and Renault to respond after this battering.

"It is important we regroup with Renault and try to offer our support where we can, because obviously they are in a bit of a mess at the moment," he conceded. "It is not the start that Renault can afford to have. We need to be doing a lot better. We need to be challenging Ferrari, we need to be

challenging Williams, and if we can sort the issues out we can do that."

But Horner admits his team won't be capable of challenging Mercedes for the championship this season. On the evidence of Melbourne, no one will. Even Mercedes privately admitted surprise at how far ahead it is again this year, though team chief Toto Wolff remains wary of the resurgent Ferrari squad.

"We have won the race with about half a minute to the Ferrari. [But] if you consider what kind of jump they've made from last year to this year it's pretty impressive," he said. "What we have seen in the GPS data is that their engine is really powerful and their car is really good.

"And half a minute is not the world, it's not as if we lapped the whole field. It's just the first race of 20. Let's see what happens in Malaysia."

Another Mercedes whitewash most probably. The question is: how many more of those can F1 afford? If Rosberg can't start beating his team-mate, probably not many... ❧

QUALIFYING

Massa qualified third despite "messed lap"



Last season Nico Rosberg beat Lewis Hamilton more often than not in qualifying.

Sitting somewhere on the mantelpiece at his Monaco home is a trophy that proves it.

But Rosberg was usually outraced by his Mercedes team-mate in 2014, and knows he needs to maintain his Saturday edge – while developing his racecraft – if he wants to beat Hamilton to this year's world championship.

On the evidence of the first qualifying session of the new season, Rosberg has let things slip. Hamilton was imperious in securing the 39th pole position of his career, setting two laps in Q3 good enough for top spot.

He described his final effort – a 1m26.327s lap that put him almost six tenths clear of Rosberg – as "a good lap", featuring no drama other than a "small lock-up" at Turn 15.

But his Mercedes colleagues were more effusive, describing Hamilton's performance as the "drive of a champion". Paddy Lowe admitted Hamilton was faster than even his own team expected.

This represented quite a turnaround from Friday practice, where Rosberg held a crucial edge. Hamilton put that down to incorrect differential settings and an "experimental" set-up on his car, which were corrected for Saturday.

For his own part, Rosberg made no excuses, simply blaming himself for being too light on his tyres at the crucial moments of Q3.

Felipe Massa rightly claimed Mercedes was in a "different category" to the rest, having qualified his Williams almost 1.4s off Hamilton. The consolation was denying Ferrari a row-two lockout by less than a tenth with what the team described as a "messed lap".

Sixth for team-mate Valtteri Bottas looked disappointing initially,

Three-wide battles! But it's outside track



until it became clear that he'd been driving with the severe discomfort of a back problem.

Daniel Ricciardo did a superb job to qualify his troublesome Red Bull seventh, after completing virtually no running in free practice thanks to a combination of hydraulic problems, an engine failure and brake-by-wire difficulties.

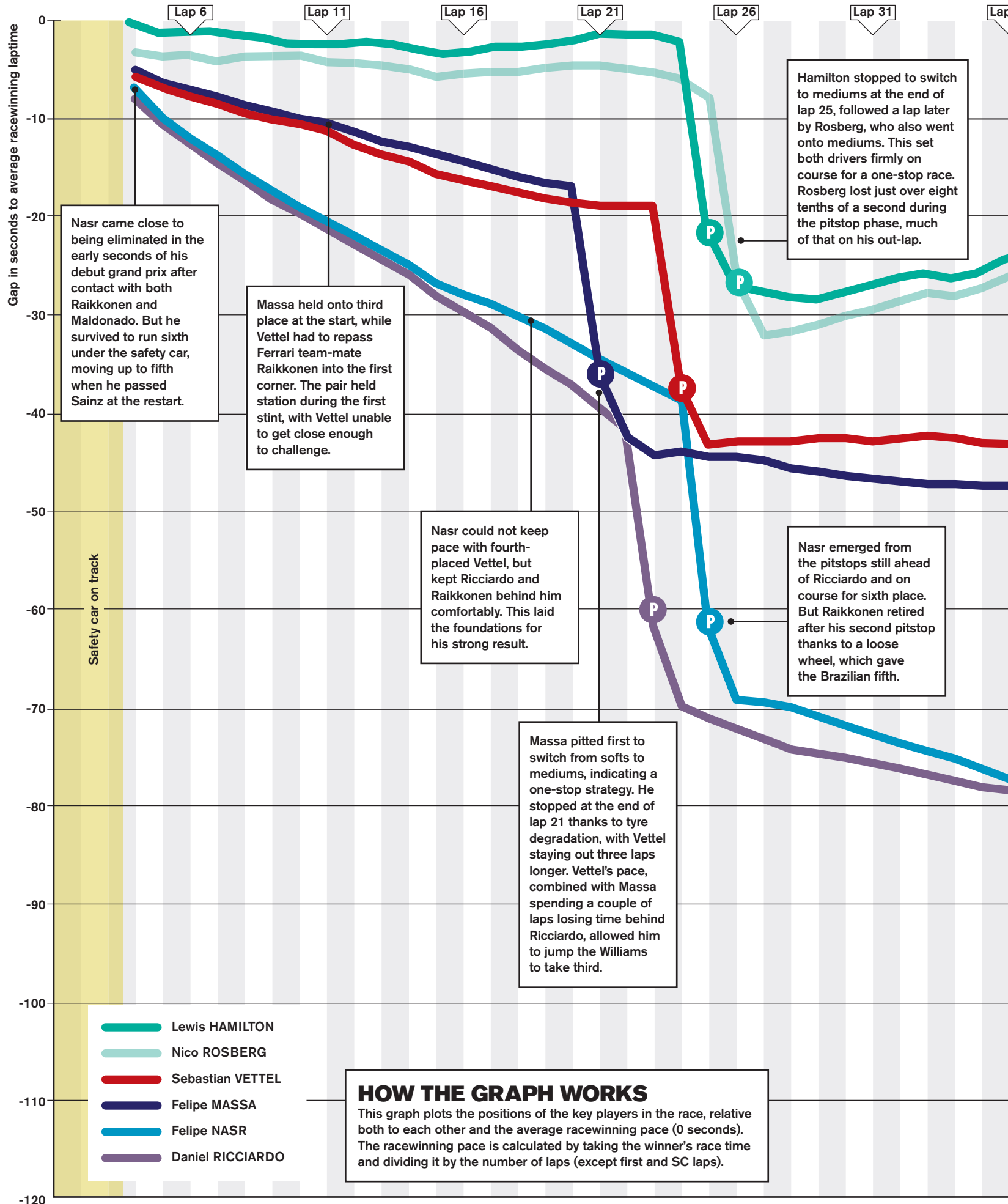
Elsewhere in the Red Bull 'family', teenager Max Verstappen was fourth fastest in Q1, but failed to escape Q2 after a mistake at Turn 4 on his best lap. Thankfully, Carlos Sainz Jr upheld Toro Rosso rookie honour by qualifying eighth.

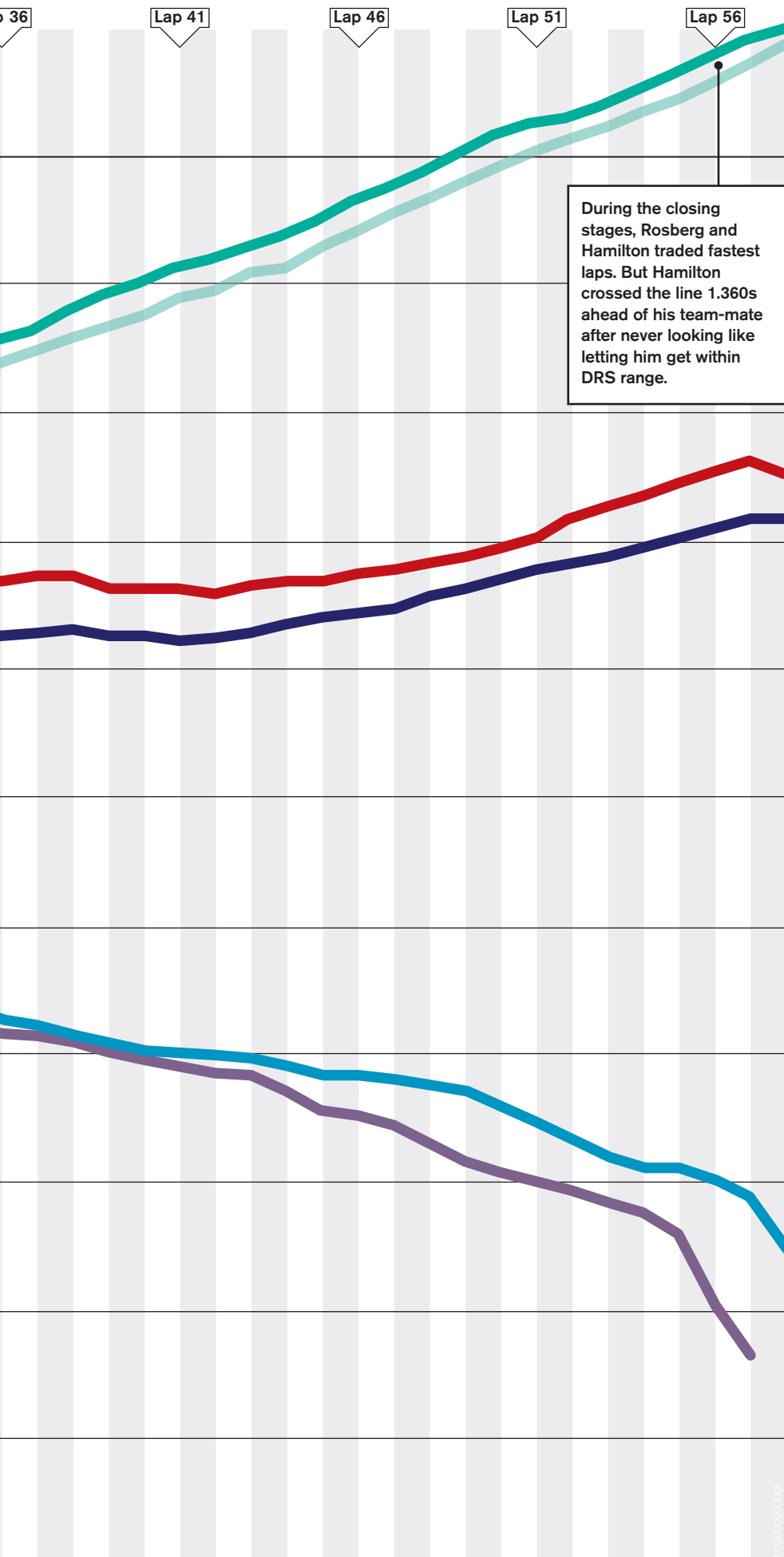
On a difficult weekend for Sauber, Felipe Nasr deserves enormous credit for qualifying 11th, and getting within 0.074s of denying Lotus the achievement of seeing both its cars in Q3 for the first time since the 2013 US GP. Team-mate Marcus Ericsson (admittedly recovering from suspension failure on Friday and a brake problem in FP3) was nowhere near.

The Swede was, in fact, far closer to the much-detuned McLaren-Hondas, which both fell embarrassingly in the first segment of qualifying.

The only cars Jenson Button and Kevin Magnussen were actually quicker than were the Manor/Marussia MR04s, and they didn't run at all.

HOW THE RACE WAS WON





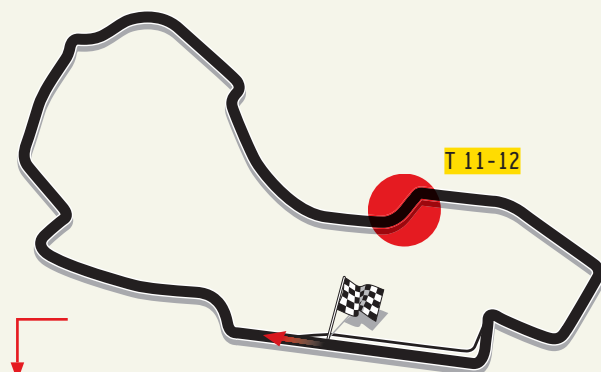
During the closing stages, Rosberg and Hamilton traded fastest laps. But Hamilton crossed the line 1.360s ahead of his team-mate after never looking like letting him get within DRS range.

TRACKSIDE VIEW

BEN ANDERSON
F1 ASSISTANT EDITOR

ben.anderson@haymarket.com

@BenAndersonAuto



Wandering up the snaking 'straight' between Turns 9/10 and the rapid left/right section at 11/12 during FP3, the sheer speed of a Formula 1 car at close proximity literally takes the breath away. It's a sensation only street circuits such as Albert Park deliver, and it's exhilarating.

Here it's clear why the likes of Red Bull and McLaren are struggling so badly. The RB11 and the MP4-30 visibly run out of steam as they approach the braking zone, while those cars with Mercedes and Ferrari propulsion continue gathering speed. For Red Bull, this is partly because of specific wing settings chosen to help counter power-delivery problems with its Renault engine at low speed, which has a negative impact at the end of the straight. For McLaren-Honda, its power deficit is exaggerated by detuning, done to avoid overheating in temperatures much higher than those seen in Spain in February. Wait until we get to Malaysia...

"Watching the cars on full-blooded, low-fuel simulations is fascinating"

Watching the cars through Turns 11/12 – on full-blooded, low-fuel qualifying simulations – is fascinating. The Ferrari looks much more compliant than last year's car, allowing Sebastian Vettel and Kimi Raikkonen to attack. Raikkonen hustles more than Vettel, so is not quite as precise. Trying too hard maybe.

The Williams looks similar, and Valtteri Bottas and Felipe Massa also have contrasting styles. Bottas sacrifices entry speed into 11 to open up the right-hander for a straighter exit; Massa carries more momentum through 11, which makes Turn 12 trickier.

This contrast is similar at Force India, with Hulkenberg in the Bottas role. Perez looks unsteady on medium tyres, but improves on the soft, matching the spectacular efforts of Lewis Hamilton and Raikkonen. Max Verstappen is also in this group – dynamic but controlled, working the car hard.



STORIES OF THE RACE

Vettel snatches third on Ferrari debut

Four-time world champion Sebastian Vettel got the better of former Scuderia mainstay Felipe Massa in a close fight to finish third on his Ferrari debut.

Massa's Williams outqualified the Ferrari narrowly on Saturday and remained ahead at the start of Sunday's race, but Vettel stayed within two seconds of his rival until Massa made his only pitstop on lap 21 of 58. Vettel then used the clear track in front of him to leapfrog the Williams when he made his own solitary stop three laps later. He thus managed to turn a 1.537s deficit into a 1s advantage in the battle for the final podium spot.

Vettel pulled a gap of approaching 5s on his fresher set of medium tyres, which Massa managed to erode slightly as the race reached its conclusion, but Vettel always appeared to have things under control and eventually finished 3.673s clear of Massa.

Massa later suggested the timing of his pitstop – and a subsequent delay trying to pass the slower Red Bull of

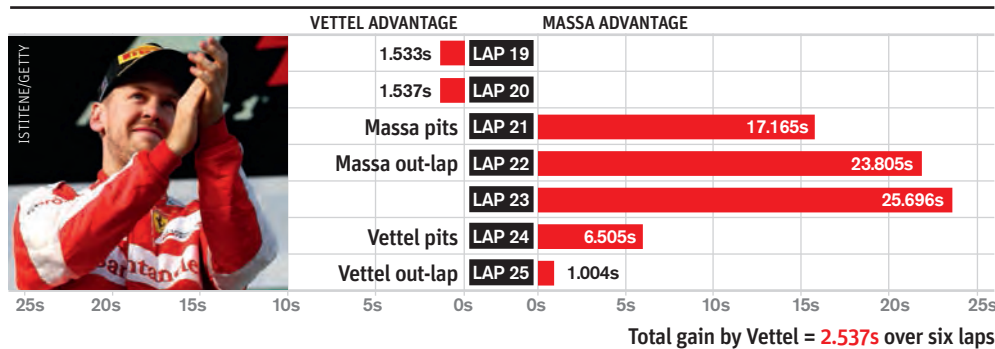
Daniel Ricciardo – might have cost him a podium, but Williams performance chief Rob Smedley said the team had no choice but to pit Massa when it did. He also admitted surprise at Vettel's pace.

"If you can follow one second behind, then it means you've got a little bit of pace in hand. The decision for us was then onefold really," Smedley explained. "If he [Vettel] managed to get the jump on us [by pitting first] then he would have got out ahead and that would have been the end of the race [for third] for us, so the only option was to pit first and try and keep him behind – and it wasn't too far away from working.

"The unfortunate thing was he had more pace than we thought. I think he found eight tenths over two laps compared to when he was sat behind Felipe, and Felipe lost 1.5 seconds trying to pass Ricciardo. Both those things stacked up against us and we ended up behind. We took a decision and it didn't come off."



HOW VETTEL OVERTURNED MASSA DEFICIT

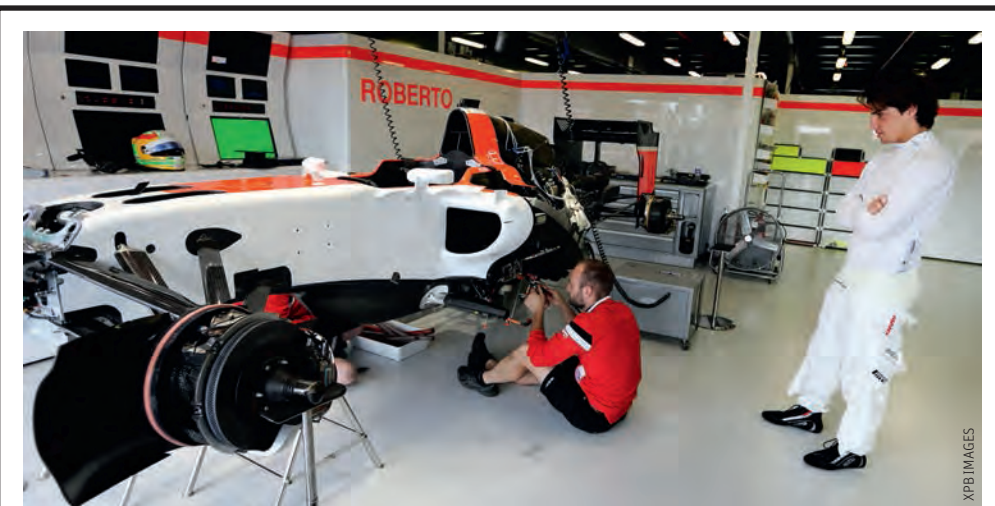


Pitstop problem costs Raikkonen

Kimi Raikkonen was on course for a top-five finish before a problem at his second pitstop led to him rejoining the circuit without his left-rear wheel properly attached. Raikkonen stopped at Turn 4 on lap 41 after the problem – caused by damage from a cross-threaded wheelnut at an earlier stop – was detected.

Unsafe releases usually lead to punishment, but FIA technical delegate Jo Bauer accepted the car was not sent out of the pits in an unsafe condition, despite one mechanic signalling a problem when Raikkonen was released. The stewards deemed Ferrari had monitored the situation closely and stopped the car as soon as the data and Raikkonen confirmed that there was a definite problem.

Raikkonen had been making up ground lost early on thanks to a hit from Carlos Sainz Jr's Toro Rosso at the start, which damaged the floor of the Ferrari and sent it briefly into anti-stall mode.



Manor escapes penalty for 'no-show'

Manor escaped penalty for failing to get its cars onto the track during the Australian Grand Prix weekend.

Problems getting the required software in place following the former Marussia team's late rescue from administration meant neither car was able to leave the garages in Melbourne.

Under article 13.2 of F1's sporting regulations, when teams enter the championship they must show that they plan to "participate in every event with the number of cars and drivers entered".

Following written evidence submitted to the stewards, as well as discussions with senior team members, the FIA eventually decided Manor had

done everything in its power to attempt to compete. Team boss John Booth dismissed any suggestion that Manor had only made a token gesture of attendance to ensure prize-money eligibility.

"I can understand people being cynical, but if that was the case we wouldn't have brought 30 tons of equipment, 40 people, and fulfilled all of our contracts with suppliers with our best endeavours to go round a circuit," he said.

"I don't think we could have prepared the same if we weren't here. We needed to be here to get a lot of the systems working. We couldn't have done it back at base."



Double points finish boosts embattled Sauber

Sauber managed a double top-10 finish in Melbourne, marking the end of a scoring drought stretching back to the 2013 Abu Dhabi GP.

Fifth for Felipe Nasr (on his Formula 1 debut), together with eighth for Marcus Ericsson, meant the Swiss team accrued its biggest points haul from a single race since Nico Hulkenberg and Esteban Gutierrez finished sixth and seventh in the 2013 Japanese Grand Prix.

Last year, Sauber failed to score a point in a single season for the first time since it entered F1 in 1993. Amid a legal dispute with former reserve driver Giedo van der Garde, which meant the team skipped FP1 entirely, the result from Australia 2015 was a huge boost.

"It's important for the motivation of the team," said team principal Monisha Kaltenborn. "I'm glad we could show all the people who felt we were just doing show runs [during winter testing in Spain] that we weren't."

Q&A

FELIPE NASR DEBUT POINTS SCORER FOR SAUBER



How difficult was it to focus, given everything that was going on with the team?

It was the most difficult weekend in my racing career. For my first ever grand prix, not having done FP1, going through all these difficult moments inside the team; but I was able to keep my head down, control my emotions, control my strengths to know when I was in the car I had to deliver. It proves myself and the team are ready to perform on the track.

Is driving so well a good comeback to those who call you a pay driver?

I think it's a good answer and that's all I work for, to put the results on the track. I'm not a guy who makes excuses. I don't know where this pay-driver [tag] came from because I've always had people investing in my career. I never had to put any family money into it; my family never had the money to do it.

And you turned down Red Bull backing earlier in your career...

What is the difference being supported by Red Bull and having a sponsor that wants to be with you? I prefer 10,000 times to have many sponsors than being stuck with one.

I'm happy to work with all the companies, especially Brazilian companies, and not to forget that Steve Robertson and Kimi [Raikkonen] were the ones to invest in my career early on. When I was 16 I already had a salary from them.

I don't see where people get this impression that I'm a pay driver; what's the problem with having a sponsor on my car?



Bad vibrations blamed for Kvyat failure

Red Bull suspects the gearbox problem that prevented Daniil Kvyat from starting the Australian Grand Prix was caused by vibrations from the engine.

The Russian was unable to start his first race for the team since being promoted from Toro Rosso after stopping while on one of his laps to the grid.

Red Bull team principal Christian Horner said: "On Daniil's car, it looks like a gearbox issue – he broke fifth

gear. Why? We don't know; it may have something to do with the oscillations we have seen from the engine."

Kvyat will now have to wait until the Malaysian GP at the end of the month to make his debut for Red Bull.

"Obviously, it's not a nice feeling to watch the other drivers on track while you are here," said Kvyat. "From now on, it can only get better so we are staying positive. I have confidence in the team."

STORIES OF THE RACE

Back problem sidelines Bottas

Valtteri Bottas was ruled out of the Australian Grand Prix as a result of back problems that developed during qualifying.

The Finn started to feel discomfort when braking during the second segment of qualifying, and had to be helped from his Williams-Mercedes after completing Q3.

Bottas was sent to the medical centre, before spending the night in hospital ahead of an assessment on Sunday morning. As a result of the problems caused by a small tear in the annular part of a disc in his lower back, he was deemed unfit to race by FIA medical delegate Jean-Charles Piette, although AUTOSPORT understands that Bottas wanted to race.

Teams are unable to put a reserve driver into the car at such a late stage of a GP weekend, so fourth-placed Felipe Massa ended up being the team's sole representative in the race.

Williams performance chief Rob Smedley said: "It came out of the blue. There were no previous signs. He was in a great deal of pain and he managed to be three tenths off that little group in front of him [in Q3], so he did a really good job."

Bottas complained about the "bite" of his brakes during the session, but Smedley suspects this could have been related to his back problem.

"He was losing sensation in the part of his body that was imparting the load onto the brake pedal," he added. "It was difficult for him to gauge how hard he was pressing the pedal."



He was in a great deal of pain, but qualified three tenths off the group in front of him

Rob Smedley

TEE/LAT

26



Double disaster for Lotus duo

Lotus lost a potential double points finish from its first race with Mercedes engines when both cars dropped out on the opening lap.

Romain Grosjean qualified ninth, but retired after a loss of power that first occurred on the formation lap, while team-mate Pastor Maldonado was the victim of a first-corner melee after the start.

Carlos Sainz Jr tagged Kimi Raikkonen at Turn 1, which caused the Ferrari to lapse into anti-stall mode temporarily. The slowing Ferrari then clipped Felipe Nasr's Sauber, forcing it into the path of Maldonado as he to drive around the outside, and sending the Venezuelan spinning into the barriers.

Sainz admitted responsibility for the incident. "I braked a bit too late, probably a bit too encouraged by my great start, and unfortunately I hit one of the Ferraris," Sainz said. "I'm sorry, but lesson learned."

McLaren struggles but gets to the finish

Jenson Button finished 11th on the race debut of the new McLaren-Honda MP4-30, but the car was well off the pace in Melbourne, as Honda was forced to detune its engines to cope with higher temperatures than those encountered during pre-season testing in Spain.

Team-mate Kevin Magnussen (deputising for Fernando Alonso while the Spaniard recovers from concussion) failed to take the start after his Honda engine blew up as the Dane drove to the grid.

The two McLarens qualified last of those who participated in Australia, but Button spiritedly held the Force India of Sergio Perez at bay for 42 laps

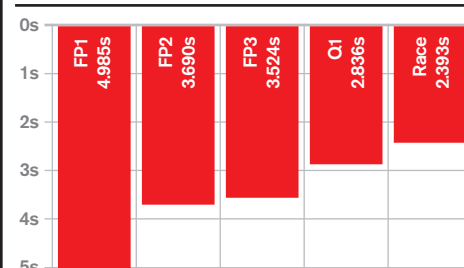
before eventually ceding position.

The 2009 world champion was lapped twice but said that completing 58 laps represented a good result in the circumstances. The team essentially treated the Australian GP as an extended test session, after its woeful pre-season.

"We're not going to say we're happy with 11th but it's a massive step for the team to finish the race after the minimal testing we had," said Button. "I was surprised to see the chequered flag, so if you look at it like that it's a good result. We'd not completed more than 12 laps without a problem before this weekend."



McLAREN'S PACE GAP



An analysis of the fastest individual laps set by a McLaren-Honda in each of the five sessions in which it participated shows it found nearly 2.6s relative to the leading Mercedes over the weekend.

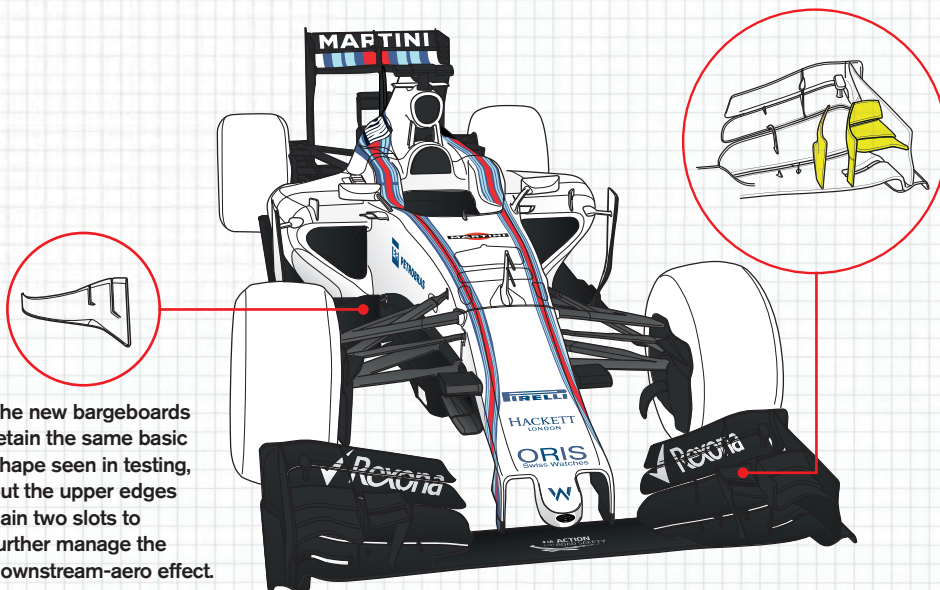
DRAWING BOARD

by Craig Scarborough

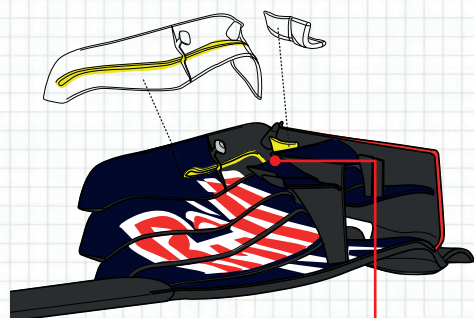
Williams FW37

The FW37 arrived in Melbourne with new bargeboards, and some revisions to its front wing that indicate Williams is moving into line with most teams' aerodynamic thinking. While the basic wing remained the same, the cascade winglets were all-new.

Whereas the previous configuration used a large winglet and then a smaller r-shape winglet next to it, now the set-up is simplified. The main winglet is smaller and narrows towards the rear, then the other winglet becomes a simple vane, with no wing elements. This is a fairly common set-up; these cascade elements are used mainly to reduce the drag and turbulence of the front tyre, rather than to add downforce, so the simplification doesn't necessarily imply a lower-downforce set-up.

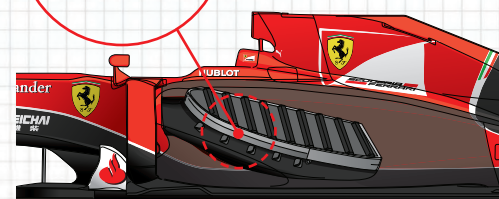
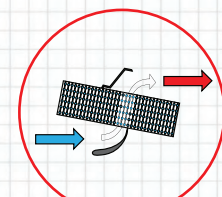


The new bargeboards retain the same basic shape seen in testing, but the upper edges gain two slots to further manage the downstream-aero effect.



Red Bull RB11

Subtle changes appeared on the RB11, though the team evaluated a new rear wing during practice. The front wing has been revised so that its rearmost flap now has a slot spanning nearly its entire width. In testing this flap only had a slot across a quarter of its span. This suggests the wing is being worked harder across its width, reflecting the higher-downforce requirements of Melbourne over the Spanish testing tracks. The flick on the inside of the endplate has evolved since early last year, from a simple single vane to one that has now taken on a split aspect.



Mercedes W06

Having gone through many small updates through testing, the W06 arrived in Melbourne with few obvious visual changes, although the nose gained a chin fairing fitted underneath. We have seen several of these under-nose devices over recent years; they work with the neutral front-wing centre section to create a little bit of downforce. When removed from the car, the hollow fairing has an open end near where it mounts to the chassis. Since it is an add-on, the car did not have to retake the crash test.

One update much discussed in testing was the new front-camera configuration, which was changed at the FIA's request. Under a new

interpretation of the rules, Mercedes, Ferrari and other teams found their camera mounts to be too close to the car's centreline, despite being legal last year. Although the camera pods themselves were in a legal position, the r-shaped mounts that joined them to the top of the nose now had to be included in the 150mm offset from the car's centreline. In Mercedes' case, the high camera-pod position stayed, with insect-like stalks sprouting from the nose to mount them. The thin uprights sit just outside the 150mm exclusion zone, and despite the odd looks provide an effective compromise between aerodynamics and legality.

Ferrari SF15-T

Ferrari surprised us with its radiator packaging, which was hidden from view during testing. The Scuderia has repositioned the sidepods' radiators compared with last year; they are now laid horizontally rather than vertically. To keep the sidepod around the radiators as small as possible, Ferrari has added louvres above and

below the coolers. These work like Venetian blinds, turning the airflow inside the duct to align it with the radiators' inner cores, then the shutter on top of the radiator turns the airflow back to horizontal. This is a clever solution to reducing the spatial requirements of the sidepods and one in which other teams have taken an interest.

Illustrations by Craig Scarborough

DRIVER RATINGS

MERCEDES



6

NICO ROSBERG

Looked stronger than Hamilton through Friday practice, but lost his way on Saturday and messed up both of his crucial laps in qualifying – normally his strongest suit. Did a decent job in the race, but needed to qualify ahead of Hamilton to have any chance of beating him. Admitted that his team-mate was simply better this weekend.

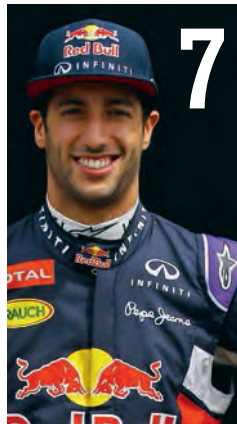


10

LEWIS HAMILTON

A flawless performance from the reigning world champion. Abandoned an experimental set-up that hurt his form on Friday and produced two laps good enough for pole in qualifying – faster than even his own team expected. Never troubled in the race; simply managed the gap to Rosberg and brought it home for his 34th F1 win.

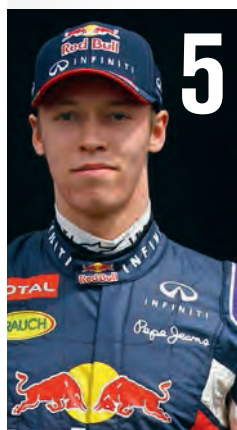
RED BULL



7

DANIEL RICCIARDO

Did a superb job to qualify seventh, given the lack of running he completed in practice thanks to hydraulic problems in FP1, an engine failure in FP2 and brake-by-wire difficulties in FP3. But he lost ground to both Sainz's Toro Rosso and Nasr's Sauber at the start and couldn't get back ahead of the Brazilian, despite being in a quicker car.



5

DANIIL KVYAT

Found it difficult to get comfortable with the RB11 through free practice and said he was driving "blind". Nevertheless, should have been much closer to team-mate Ricciardo in qualifying but ended up nearly four tenths slower and 13th in Q2. Nothing he could do about gearbox failure on his out-lap to the grid.

WILLIAMS



7

FELIPE MASSA

Williams reckoned Massa's qualifying lap was one of the most disappointing since he's been at the team, so he was probably lucky to squeak ahead of the Ferraris. Reckoned poor timing of his pitstop cost him in fight with Vettel, as it released him behind the slower Red Bull of Ricciardo, but team said there was no other option.

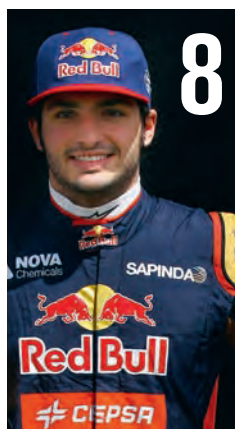


8

VALTTERI BOTTAS

Arguably did a heroic job to outpace Massa in Q2 while coping with a worsening back problem that first revealed itself during the session. Struggled in Q3 (understandably), but still managed to qualify sixth before hobbling out of his car. Wanted to race on Sunday, but the FIA medical delegate said no. His advice was heeded.

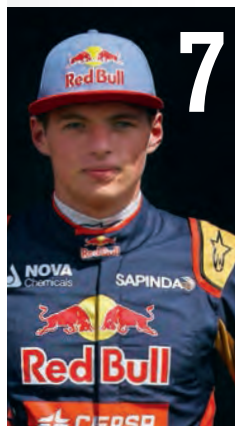
TORO ROSSO



8

CARLOS SAINZ JR

Highly accomplished F1 debut. Qualified eighth, probably the maximum possible. Rose to fifth on the first lap, but was lucky to avoid damage after tagging Raikkonen's Ferrari into Turn 1. Wrong software settings (not his fault) lost him valuable places at the restart and a pitstop problem cost him 33s, without which he'd have finished seventh.

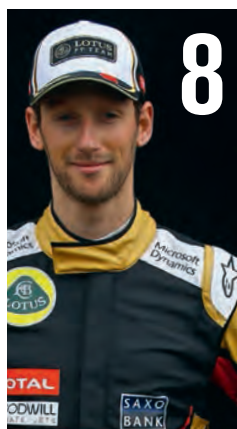


7

MAX VERSTAPPEN

The youngest driver ever to start a grand prix banished all fears - and silenced critics - that he might be too young or too inexperienced for this game with a polished performance. Was outqualified by his team-mate after a crucial mistake in Q2, but drove a strong first stint and was on for a points finish until engine failure intervened.

LOTUS



8

ROMAIN GROSJEAN

Much-improved Lotus looked odds-on to score points at this race, but a "loss of power" on the formation lap meant the Frenchman never had the chance to deliver on the promising race run he completed on Friday. Perhaps should have outqualified Sainz's Toro Rosso with a better lap in Q3, but otherwise can't really be faulted.



6

PASTOR MALDONADO

Maldonado has a bad reputation for getting involved in accidents, but the one that eliminated him from this race at the first corner was certainly not his fault, pitched into the wall as he was by the consequences of contact between Sainz and Raikkonen. Marked down for being slower than Grosjean through FP3 and qualifying.

“NASR CAME HOME FIFTH, THE HIGHEST FINISH FOR A BRAZILIAN DEBUTANT IN F1 HISTORY”



BEN ANDERSON reviews and rates each driver's grand prix weekend performance out of 10

FERRARI



SEBASTIAN VETTEL

Achieved the maximum result possible on his Ferrari debut, saving his tyres behind Massa's Williams during the first stint, then unleashing enough speed to jump the Brazilian when he made his own stop a couple of laps later. Only gets marked down for failing to outqualify the Williams when he probably should have done.



KIMI RAIKKONEN

Wasn't pleased with his driving, but only qualified fractionally behind Vettel. Made an excellent start and almost passed his team-mate into Turn 1, but got squeezed out and then hit by Sainz's Toro Rosso, which damaged the floor and sent the car into anti-stall mode. Recovered well to fifth before the team's late pitstop blunder.

McLAREN



KEVIN MAGNUSSEN

Never even made it to the start, thanks to his Honda engine going bang spectacularly on his out-lap to the grid, so who knows what he could have done in the race? But the Dane qualified significantly slower than Button (to the tune of more than 0.6s), having been quicker in FP3. Also loses marks for his needless shunt in FP2.



JENSON BUTTON

The McLaren-Honda was so woefully off the pace of anything else out there that it's hard to gauge the ultimate quality of Button's performance, but he deserves enormous credit for his steely (and successful) defence of position from the faster Force India of Sergio Perez for 42 laps. Points were impossible without more attrition.

FORCE INDIA



SERGIO PEREZ

The Mexican admitted before the race that it would be a "mega job" to score points at this event, given the lack of testing with the new VJM08. Managed to collect the final one on offer, but drove poorly for it. Overtook Ericsson under the safety car, drove into Button, and also went off on his own. Not his finest race.



NICO HULKENBERG

Hulkenberg messed up the final part of his fastest lap in qualifying, but was then flawless in the race. Force India has been up against it thanks to severe delays getting its new car ready, but Hulkenberg again showed the sort of class that makes him one of the team's most vital assets. He really couldn't have finished any higher than seventh.



SAUBER



MARCUS ERICSSON

Hampered by suspension failure in FP2 and a brake problem in FP3, but the Swede looked ragged as he qualified well adrift of his rookie team-mate. Used a three-stop strategy to score points, but dropped too much time around his pitstops and lost touch with Hulkenberg's Force India, which shouldn't have finished 15s up the road.



FELIPE NASR

A superlative F1 debut. Kept his head in difficult circumstances, built up speed carefully through practice, and did a great job to come within a tenth of making Q3. Superb start gained crucial track position, and he kept the faster Red Bull of Ricciardo at bay to come home fifth, the highest finish for a Brazilian debutant in F1 history.

MANOR



WILL STEVENS

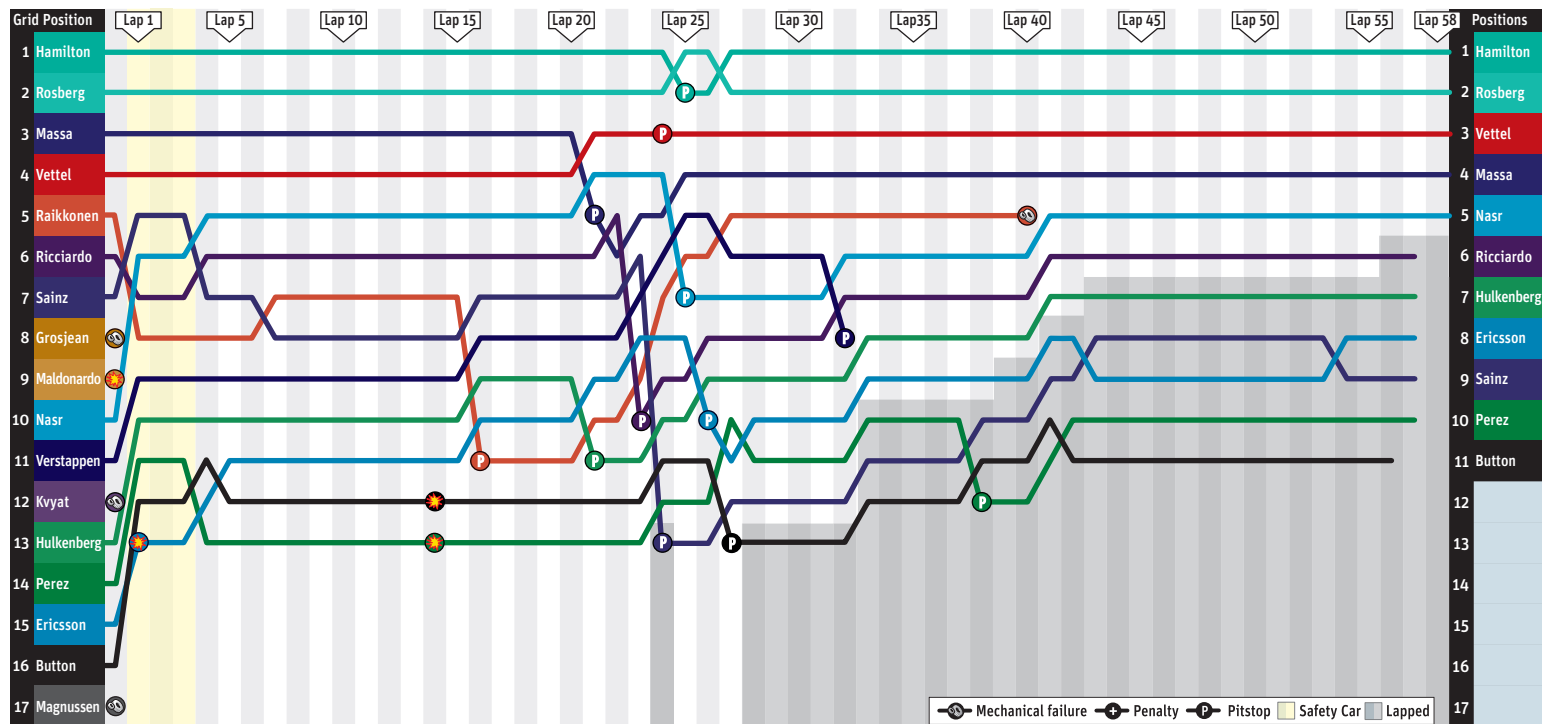
Probably would feel worse about this weekend if he hadn't already made his grand prix debut for Caterham in Abu Dhabi last November. Was pleased with his own performance in passing the mandatory timed test for exiting his car's cockpit safely. Otherwise, did an excellent job standing around and watching the race.



ROBERTO MERHI

Still waiting to make his grand prix debut, thanks to the ongoing software problems that confined the revived Manor/Marussia team to the garage all weekend. Hopefully the squad will get its cars up and running in time for Merhi to change that fact before his concurrent F1 Renault 3.5 campaign gets under way on April 25.

RESULTS



PRACTICE 1: Friday

| POS | DRIVER | TIME |
|-----|------------|-----------|
| 1 | ROSBERG | 1m29.557s |
| 2 | HAMILTON | 1m29.586s |
| 3 | BOTTAS | 1m30.748s |
| 4 | SAINZ | 1m31.014s |
| 5 | VETTEL | 1m31.029s |
| 6 | VERSTAPPEN | 1m31.067s |
| 7 | MASSA | 1m31.188s |
| 8 | RAIKKONEN | 1m31.310s |
| 9 | MALDONADO | 1m31.451s |
| 10 | RICCIARDO | 1m31.570s |
| 11 | KVYAT | 1m32.073s |
| 12 | PEREZ | 1m32.247s |
| 13 | HULKENBERG | 1m32.261s |
| 14 | BUTTON | 1m34.542s |
| 15 | MAGNUSSEN | 1m34.785s |
| 16 | GROSJEAN | 2m17.782s |

PRACTICE 2: Friday

| POS | DRIVER | TIME |
|-----|------------|-----------|
| 1 | ROSBERG | 1m27.697s |
| 2 | HAMILTON | 1m27.797s |
| 3 | VETTEL | 1m28.412s |
| 4 | RAIKKONEN | 1m28.842s |
| 5 | BOTTAS | 1m29.265s |
| 6 | KVYAT | 1m30.016s |
| 7 | SAINZ | 1m30.071s |
| 8 | MALDONADO | 1m30.104s |
| 9 | GROSJEAN | 1m30.205s |
| 10 | HULKENBERG | 1m30.473s |
| 11 | NASR | 1m30.755s |
| 12 | PEREZ | 1m30.980s |
| 13 | BUTTON | 1m31.387s |
| 14 | VERSTAPPEN | 1m31.395s |
| 15 | ERICSSON | 1m32.303s |
| 16 | MAGNUSSEN | 1m33.289s |

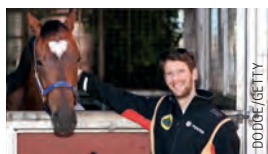
PRACTICE 3: Saturday

| POS | DRIVER | TIME |
|-----|------------|-----------|
| 1 | HAMILTON | 1m27.867s |
| 2 | VETTEL | 1m28.563s |
| 3 | ROSBERG | 1m28.821s |
| 4 | BOTTAS | 1m28.912s |
| 5 | MASSA | 1m28.988s |
| 6 | RAIKKONEN | 1m29.017s |
| 7 | GROSJEAN | 1m29.481s |
| 8 | MALDONADO | 1m29.864s |
| 9 | SAINZ | 1m29.869s |
| 10 | NASR | 1m29.934s |
| 11 | VERSTAPPEN | 1m29.952s |
| 12 | ERICSSON | 1m30.613s |
| 13 | HULKENBERG | 1m30.741s |
| 14 | PEREZ | 1m30.993s |
| 15 | RICCIARDO | 1m31.185s |
| 16 | MAGNUSSEN | 1m31.391s |
| 17 | BUTTON | 1m31.666s |
| 18 | KVYAT | 1m32.830s |

Weather: 23C, sunny

Weather: 21C, sunny

Weather: 25C, c/oudy



QUALIFYING TIMES

| POS | DRIVER | QUALIFYING 1 | QUALIFYING 2 | QUALIFYING 3 |
|-----|------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| 1 | HAMILTON | 1m28.586s (1) | 1m26.894s (1) | 1m26.327s |
| 2 | ROSBERG | 1m28.906s (2) | 1m27.097s (2) | 1m26.921s |
| 3 | MASSA | 1m29.246s (3) | 1m27.895s (6) | 1m27.718s |
| 4 | VETTEL | 1m29.307s (5) | 1m27.742s (3) | 1m27.757s |
| 5 | RAIKKONEN | 1m29.754s (10) | 1m27.807s (5) | 1m27.790s |
| 6 | BOTTAS | 1m29.641s (8) | 1m27.796s (4) | 1m28.087s |
| 7 | RICCIARDO | 1m29.788s (11) | 1m28.679s (9) | 1m28.329s |
| 8 | SAINZ | 1m29.597s (7) | 1m28.601s (8) | 1m28.510s |
| 9 | GROSJEAN | 1m29.537s (6) | 1m28.589s (7) | 1m28.560s |
| 10 | MALDONADO | 1m29.843s (12) | 1m28.726s (10) | 1m29.480s |
| 11 | NASR | 1m30.430s (15) | 1m28.800s | - |
| 12 | VERSTAPPEN | 1m29.248s (4) | 1m28.868s | - |
| 13 | KVYAT | 1m30.402s (14) | 1m29.070s | - |
| 14 | HULKENBERG | 1m29.651s (9) | 1m29.208s | - |
| 15 | PEREZ | 1m29.990s (13) | 1m29.209s | - |
| 16 | ERICSSON | 1m31.376s | - | - |
| 17 | BUTTON | 1m31.422s | - | - |
| 18 | MAGNUSSEN | 1m32.037s | - | - |
| 19 | MERHI | - | - | - |
| 20 | STEVENS | - | - | - |

Weather: 20C, sunny

QUALIFYING STATISTICS

| | HEAD TO HEAD | |
|-----------|--------------|-----|
| ROSBERG | 0 | 1 |
| RICCIARDO | 1 | 0 |
| MASSA | 1 | 0 |
| VETTEL | 1 | 0 |
| MAGNUSSEN | 0 | 1 |
| PEREZ | 0 | 1 |
| SAINZ | 1 | 0 |
| GROSJEAN | 1 | 0 |
| ERICSSON | 0 | 1 |
| STEVENS | N/A | N/A |



POLE POSITION TROPHY

| HAMILTON |
|----------|
| AUS 1 |



RACE: 58 LAPS - 191.118 MILES

| POS | DRIVER | TEAM | LAPS | TOTAL TIME | FASTEST LAP | PITSTOPS | TIME IN PITS | GRID |
|-----|------------------|----------------------|------|--------------|-------------|----------|--------------|------|
| 1 | LEWIS HAMILTON | MERCEDES | 58 | 1h31m54.067s | 1m30.945s | 1 | 22.295s | 1 |
| 2 | NICO ROSBERG | MERCEDES | 58 | +1.360s | 1m31.092s | 1 | 22.105s | 2 |
| 3 | SEBASTIAN VETTEL | FERRARI | 58 | +34.523s | 1m31.457s | 1 | 22.694s | 4 |
| 4 | FELIPE MASSA | WILLIAMS-MERCEDES | 58 | +38.196s | 1m31.719s | 1 | 22.062s | 3 |
| 5 | FELIPE NASR | SAUBER-FERRARI | 58 | +1m35.149s | 1m32.612s | 1 | 22.933s | 10 |
| 6 | DANIEL RICCIARDO | RED BULL-RENAULT | 57 | -1 lap | 1m32.797s | 1 | 22.535s | 6 |
| 7 | NICO HULKENBERG | FORCE INDIA-MERCEDES | 57 | -1 lap | 1m31.970s | 2 | 43.749s | 13 |
| 8 | MARCUS ERICSSON | SAUBER-FERRARI | 57 | -1 lap | 1m31.560s | 3 | 1m08.288s | 15 |
| 9 | CARLOS SAINZ | TORO ROSSO-RENAULT | 57 | -1 lap | 1m32.872s | 1 | 55.789s | 7 |
| 10 | SERGIO PEREZ | FORCE INDIA-MERCEDES | 57 | -1 lap | 1m31.959s | 1 | 26.009s | 14 |
| 11 | JENSON BUTTON | McLAREN-HONDA | 56 | -2 laps | 1m33.338s | 1 | 23.353s | 16 |
| R | KIMI RAIKKONEN | FERRARI | 40 | wheel | 1m31.426s | 2 | 49.870s | 5 |
| R | MAX VERSTAPPEN | TORO ROSSO-RENAULT | 32 | power unit | 1m34.295s | 1 | 23.532s | 11 |
| R | ROMAIN GROSJEAN | LOTUS-MERCEDES | 0 | power unit | - | - | - | 8 |
| R | PASTOR MALDONADO | LOTUS-MERCEDES | 0 | collision | - | - | - | 9 |
| NS | DANIIL KVYAT | RED BULL-RENAULT | 0 | gearbox | - | - | - | 12 |
| NS | KEVIN MAGNUSSEN | McLAREN-HONDA | 0 | power unit | - | - | - | 17 |
| NS | VALTTERI BOTTAS | WILLIAMS-MERCEDES | 0 | physical | - | - | - | 0 |
| W | WILL STEVENS | MARUSSIA-FERRARI | - | - | - | - | - | 0 |
| W | ROBERTO MERHI | MARUSSIA-FERRARI | - | - | - | - | - | 0 |

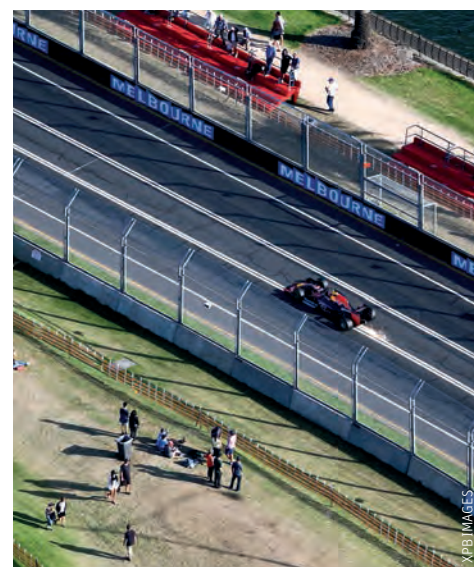
Weather: 17C, sunny. Winner's average speed: 124.776mph. Fastest lap: Hamilton 1m30.945s (130.435mph) on lap 50.
Lap leader: 1-24 Hamilton, 25-26 Rosberg, 27-58 Hamilton.

DRIVERS' STANDINGS

| POS | DRIVER | PTS | AUS | MAL | CHN | BRN | E | MC | CDN | A | GB | D | H | B | I | SGP | J | RUS | USA | MEX | BR | UAE | |
|-----|------------|-----|------------------|-----|-----|-----|---|----|-----|---|----|---|---|---|---|-----|---|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|---|
| 1 | HAMILTON | 25 | 1 st | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 2 | ROSBERG | 18 | 2 nd | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 3 | VETTEL | 15 | 3 rd | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 4 | MASSA | 12 | 4 th | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 5 | NASR | 10 | 5 th | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 6 | RICCIARDO | 8 | 6 th | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 7 | HULKENBERG | 6 | 7 th | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 8 | ERICSSON | 4 | 8 th | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 9 | SAINZ | 2 | 9 th | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 10 | PEREZ | 1 | 10 th | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 11 | BUTTON | 0 | 11 th | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 12 | RAIKKONEN | 0 | ret | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 13 | VERSTAPPEN | 0 | ret | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 14 | GROSJEAN | 0 | ret | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 15 | MALDONADO | 0 | ret | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 16 | KVYAT | 0 | NS | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 17 | MAGNUSSEN | 0 | NS | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 18 | BOTTAS | 0 | NS | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 19 | STEVENS | 0 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 20 | MERHI | 0 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |

TYRE CHOICE

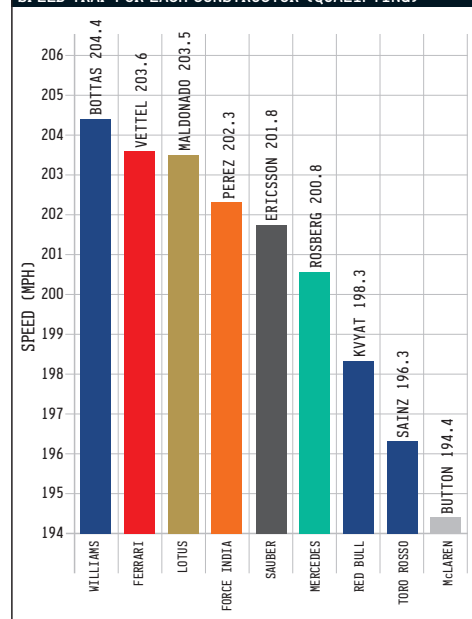
| STINT 1 | STINT 2 | STINT 3 | STINT 4 |
|------------|-------------|------------|----------|
| Soft Used | Medium New | | |
| Soft Used | Medium New | | |
| Soft Used | Medium New | | |
| Soft Used | Medium New | | |
| Soft New | Medium New | | |
| Soft Used | Medium New | | |
| Soft New | Medium New | Soft Used | |
| Medium New | Soft New | Soft New | Soft New |
| Soft Used | Medium Used | | |
| Medium New | Soft New | | |
| Soft New | Medium New | | |
| Soft Used | Soft Used | Medium New | |
| Medium New | | | |
| Soft Used | | | |
| Soft Used | | | |



CONSTRUCTORS' STANDINGS

| POS | CONSTRUCTOR | PTS | AUS | MAL | CHN | BRN | E | MC | CDN | A | GB | D | H | B | I | SGP | J | RUS | USA | MEX | BR | UAE | |
|-----|-------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|----|-----|---|----|---|---|---|---|-----|---|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|---|
| 1 | MERCEDES | 43 | 43 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 2 | FERRARI | 15 | 15 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 3 | SAUBER | 14 | 14 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 4 | WILLIAMS | 12 | 12 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 5 | RED BULL | 8 | 8 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 6 | FORCE INDIA | 7 | 7 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 7 | TORO ROSSO | 2 | 2 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 8 | McLAREN | 0 | 0 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 9 | LOTUS | 0 | 0 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 10 | MARUSSIA | 0 | 0 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |

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Honda two years behind Mercedes

McLaren only got one car to the start of the Australian Grand Prix, and Jenson Button finished it last. EDD STRAW explains why Honda has had to change its targets for being competitive in F1

Expectations of McLaren-Honda were lowered dramatically during pre-season testing in Spain. What then happened in the Australian Grand Prix only served to underline that thinking, with Kevin Magnussen suffering a power-unit failure before the race even started and Jenson Button being the only driver running at the chequered flag not to score a point.

But there was genuine relief, not to mention surprise, within both McLaren and Honda that Button was able to make it to the chequered flag at all. After all, the car had not managed more than a dozen or so laps without hitting trouble during testing; the Australian GP marked the completion of its first race distance. Well, race distance minus two laps, for that's how far behind Button was at the finish.

There is little doubt that Honda has underestimated the challenge of competing in Formula 1. After all, only five months ago during a press conference at the Japanese GP, Honda engine-programme boss



Magnussen shunted during practice, losing important track time

Yasuhisa Arai stated that “this season, the Mercedes is top so next season we shall achieve that same competition or power”. So how has it gone so badly wrong?

If anything, the biggest failure was one of not managing expectations more realistically. Last year, suggestions that only having one partner team and coming in late might be a disadvantage were shrugged off.

But having had such a troubled start, neither McLaren nor Honda can attempt to deny that starting off on the back foot was inevitable.

After qualifying on the back row in Australia, Button was asked to compare the current state of the Honda to the similarly immature Mercedes power unit used by McLaren at the same point last year. But the 2009 world champion shot down the

validity of such a comparison.

“It’s very different situations for both manufacturers,” said Button. “Mercedes were also working on the engine for a lot longer before they started racing with it.

“Also, they had four teams developing the engine in winter testing, whereas we had one car, so it’s an unfair comparison. You can have that comparison maybe in a year’s time.”



McLaren was at least happy that Button didn't end up in garage in race

“Because we lost time in testing, we did not confirm everything”

HONDA'S YASUHISA ARAI

So, already that pitches Honda as being two years behind Mercedes. This suggestion was echoed by McLaren racing director Eric Boullier, who said that “these engines, this technology still has a lot of potential to unlock, so it may take more than a couple of years to catch up.”

This is no great surprise. Honda gave its F1 project the green light publicly in May 2013. Mercedes, by

contrast, is understood to have started single-cylinder experimentation at Brixworth as early as 2010, before the current 1.6-litre V6 turbo hybrid engine rules were finalised.

But it's one thing to compare Honda with the standard-setting Mercedes, another to ask when it can realistically get itself into the competitive spread in the midfield. In qualifying in Australia, the lead McLaren of Button was 5.095s off Lewis Hamilton's pole position time. Even if you take into account the fact that track conditions will have improved later in qualifying (by which time both McLarens had long since been eliminated), that's a huge deficit.

More significantly, Button was 2.2s off the slowest Q2 time, which was set up by Sergio Perez's Force India. Had the Manor team been able to get its cars running properly, you could make a case for them being quicker.

This means McLaren has to make up a yawning chasm simply to join the back of the current field, let alone get into the mix for top results. Fortunately for Honda, there are reasons to cut it a little slack. Because of the troubled pre-season testing, Honda was uncertain about the behaviour of the engine in higher temperatures. While Melbourne was not exactly enjoying a heatwave, it was still warmer than during pre-season testing, so the decision was taken to detune the engines to protect the V6 engine and the MGU-K in particular. The rationale was that mileage was needed and Honda could not afford to lose power-unit components so early in the season.

“There are several reasons, but one is that we did not confirm precisely in the high temperatures [the behaviour of the engine],” said Arai. “Because we lost time in pre-season testing with many issues of concern, we lost a lot of time and we did not confirm everything in ideal track conditions.”

This means there is at least some low-hanging performance fruit to be picked. Provided the engine can be run safely temperature-wise soon – which will not happen in tropical Malaysia next week – it's not unreasonable to suggest that a second or two of performance can be gained relatively quickly to latch onto the back of that midfield pack.

But beyond that, it may prove to be much harder. Honda has a long way to go and, while confidence remains that it will, in the long term, be in a position to challenge dominant Mercedes, that has to be years, rather than months, away. ❧

McLAREN'S TOUGH STARTS

Disregarding those occasions when neither car finished, the 2015 Australian GP was the worst start to any season for the McLaren team, with Jenson Button finishing 11th and the sister car of Kevin Magnussen retiring on its way to the grid. Here are the other seven occasions on which McLaren failed to score in the opening round.



1966

The McLaren team made its debut in the Monaco Grand Prix with a single entry for Bruce McLaren. The Ford V8-powered McLaren M2B qualified 2.9s off the pace and retired after nine laps with a water leak.

1977

James Hunt – the reigning champion – and Jochen Mass both retired from the season-opening Argentinian Grand Prix. But while there were no points scored in that race, McLaren went on to have a solid season, with Hunt winning three grands prix.

1981

Andrea de Cesaris and John Watson qualified terribly, lining up 22nd and 23rd at Long Beach. The race didn't go much better, with de Cesaris wiping himself out on the opening lap after rear-ending another car and Watson having to stop after 16 laps.



1986

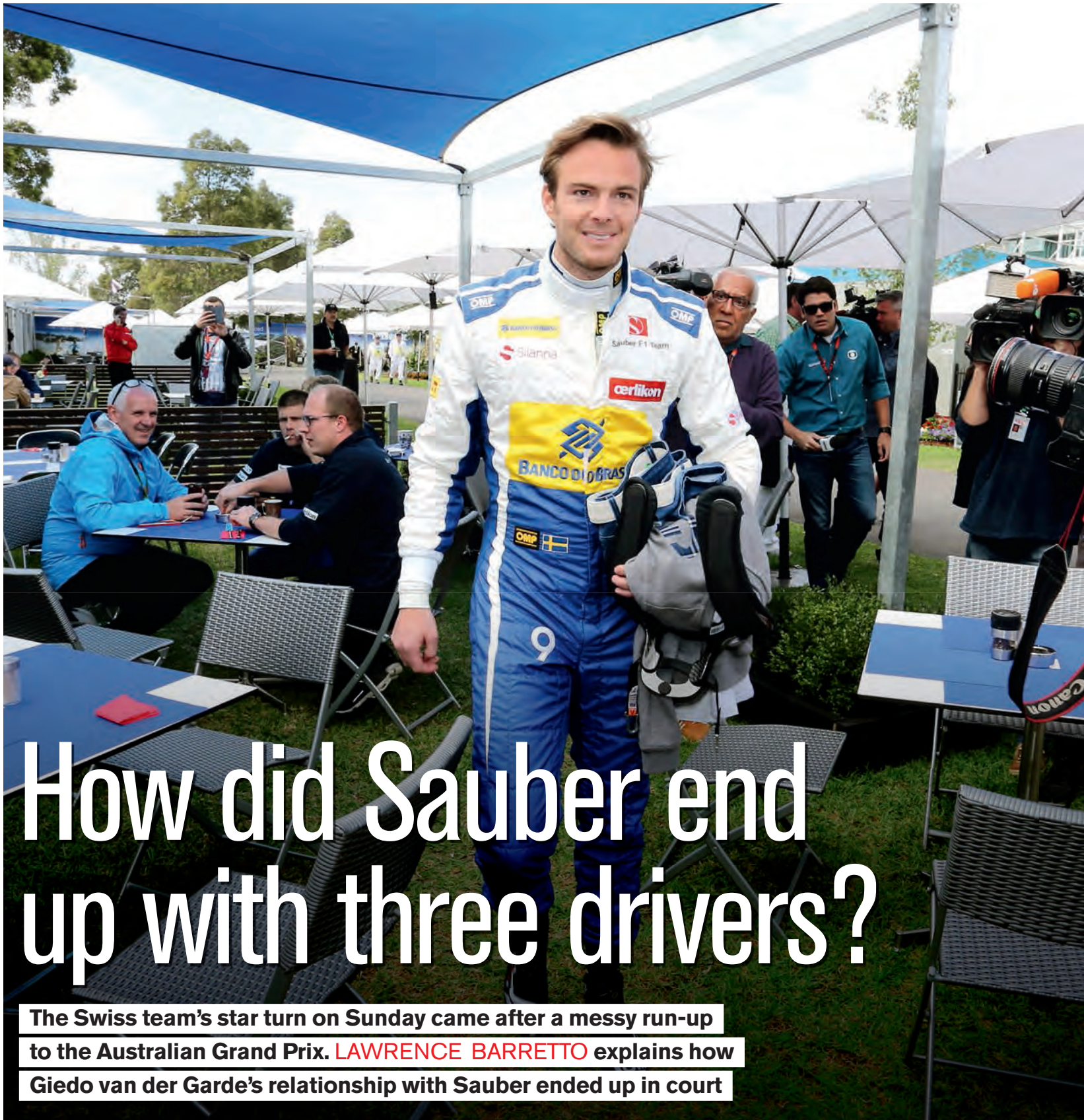
Neither Alain Prost nor Keke Rosberg made the finish at Rio, although the pace of the McLaren was good enough for both to qualify in the bottom half of the top 10. Prost went on to win the drivers' title at the final round after Williams ran into tyre trouble.

1994

The McLaren-Peugeot wasn't an especially reliable package, so Mika Hakkinen was not surprised to suffer an engine failure early on in the Brazilian GP. Martin Brundle was slightly more surprised to have Jos Verstappen's Benetton landing on top of him during a shunt that Eddie Irvine was blamed for setting in motion.

1999/2000

In both seasons, the McLaren chassis was rapid in the season-opening Australian Grand Prix, and Mika Hakkinen lined up the front row of the grid each time. But on both occasions, neither of the McLarens was still in the race when it reached half-distance (some may detect an irony in the fact that in 2000 both were eliminated by Mercedes engine failures).



34

How did Sauber end up with three drivers?

The Swiss team's star turn on Sunday came after a messy run-up to the Australian Grand Prix. **LAWRENCE BARRETTO** explains how Giedo van der Garde's relationship with Sauber ended up in court

There was only one story in town in the build-up to the season-opening Australian Grand Prix – and it had nothing to do with what was going on out on track at Albert Park. Sauber had hit the headlines, but for the wrong reasons as the legal mess the Swiss team had got itself into played itself out in public.

Giedo van der Garde, the team's reserve driver in 2014, had taken it to court in Australia as he claimed

he had a valid contract to drive, despite Felipe Nasr and Marcus Ericsson being named as Sauber's drivers for 2015. Why had the team seemingly signed three drivers when it only had two seats?

The roots of the conflict go back to last season, when it was well known that Sauber was struggling for funding, a situation made more difficult when a deal with a trio of Russian companies did not progress as hoped. When it reached the

summer without scoring a point, Sauber decided to take up an option to promote van der Garde to the race seat in 2015; the Dutchman brings long-term backers such as the clothing brand McGregor, owned by his father-in-law Marcel Boekhoorn, one of the wealthiest businessmen in the Netherlands.

But as the season wore on, it became increasingly clear that, for the first time in its 21-year Formula 1 history, Sauber was unlikely to

score points. That meant a smaller slice of the commercial-rights pie and even more calls on an already stretched budget.

So Sauber made a calculation. It would sign Nasr, who brings significant backing from Banco do Brasil (as evinced by its branding on the car), and Ericsson, who also brings a budget, and then come to an arrangement with van der Garde.

But it misjudged the situation. Van der Garde wasn't prepared to

Van der Garde's appearance in Ericsson's race suit provoked great excitement



Ericsson and Nasr joined Sauber line-up after team had signed van der Garde

be ejected thus, and team boss Monisha Kaltenborn conceded in Melbourne that things had not gone as expected. "We have a very clear view of what we did," she said. "We had taken action, after a while we thought about it very well and for us that was very clear. The outcome here is different."

Van der Garde took Sauber to court in Switzerland over failing to fulfil his contract and an award was given in early March, though it went largely unreported. But Sauber's contractual woes were about to be made public. An Australian court agreed with its Swiss counterpart the following week – but wasn't so quiet about it. The Supreme Court of Victoria video streamed the hearings live online and tweeted from the court room.

The theatre continued in the Melbourne paddock as van der Garde rocked up on Friday of the race weekend, all smiles, for a seat fitting. He emerged from the Sauber garage wearing Ericsson's overalls, providing the pictures the waiting photographers had been waiting to capture.

There was confusion at Sauber. Nasr admitted he "didn't know what was going to happen", adding that the situation wasn't "ideal coming into my first grand prix weekend

having to go through all this". The team remained tight-lipped and refused to comment.

But behind the scenes, it wasn't giving up. It appealed the court's decision, but that was rejected. Sauber then found itself back in court as van der Garde brought new proceedings, claiming the team was in contempt of court for not abiding by the original court order. He asked for the team's assets to be seized.

But on qualifying day, six days after the first hearing, van der Garde dropped his case following "constructive discussions" and gave up his legal rights to race in Australia. It appeared like an amicable arrangement was close. But the original court order, which says van der Garde has a contract for 2015, remains.

As AUTOSPORT went to press, the outcome of Sauber's talks has yet to be made public. But there was a noticeable sense of relief in the Sauber camp on Saturday afternoon in Melbourne, with Kaltenborn looking like a little of the weight had been lifted from her shoulders.

And that was boosted on Sunday when the team scored points for the first time since 2013, with Nasr fifth and Ericsson eighth – a positive outcome to a messy weekend. But the affair is not over yet. ❧

Felipe Nasr had an impressive debut, finishing fifth



"We have a very clear view of what we did. The outcome here is different"

MONISHA KALTENBORN

VAN DER GARDE vs SAUBER

June 28 2014

Sauber exercises contractual option to nominate Giedo van der Garde as one of its two drivers for 2015.

November 2 2014

The team signs Marcus Ericsson as a 2015 race driver.

November 5 2014

Sauber announces Felipe Nasr as a race driver for 2015.

Early November 2014

Sauber team principal Monisha Kaltenborn tells van der Garde that Sauber's seats have been given to other drivers, and he will not have a drive.

November 24 2014

Van der Garde begins legal proceedings against Sauber in a Swiss court.

March 2 2015

Swiss court hands down an award in favour of van der Garde.

March 5 2015

Van der Garde begins legal proceedings in the Supreme Court of Victoria as he bids to race in the season-opening Australian Grand Prix.

March 11 2015

The Australian court rules van der Garde has the right to race for Sauber in Melbourne. The court reconvenes on the same day after Sauber appeals, but the appeal is dismissed.

March 12 2015

Van der Garde begins new proceedings, requesting Sauber be found in contempt of court for not complying with the court order, and that the team's assets be seized.

March 13 2015

The Dutchman arrives in the paddock for a seat fitting. Meanwhile, the case begins and is then adjourned after "constructive discussions".

March 14 2015

Van der Garde gives up his legal rights to race in Australia following talks through the night, during which he comes to an arrangement with Sauber.

March 15 2015

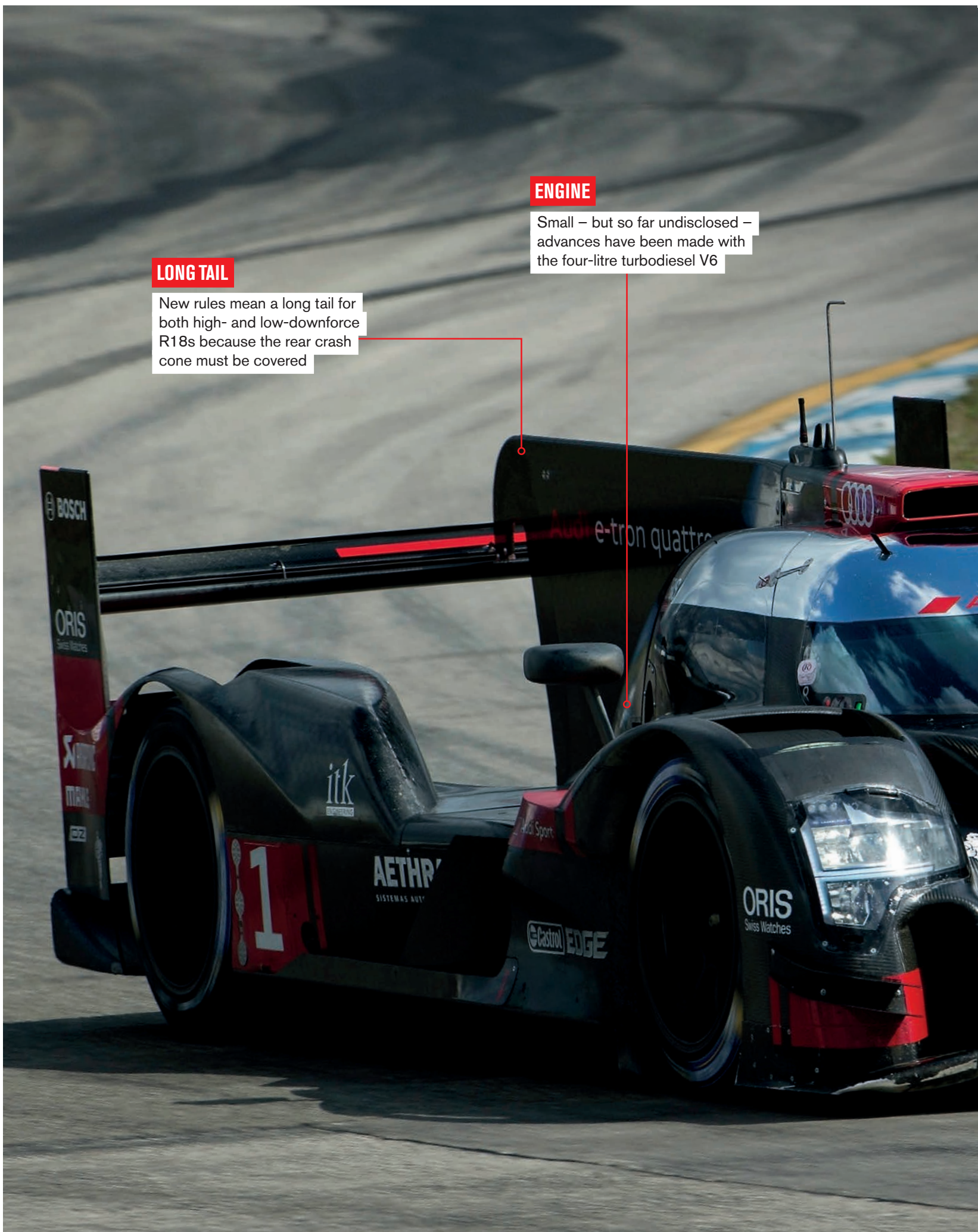
Nasr finishes an impressive fifth, with Ericsson eighth, as Sauber scores its first points since the 2013 Brazilian GP.

LONG TAIL

New rules mean a long tail for both high- and low-downforce R18s because the rear crash cone must be covered

ENGINE

Small – but so far undisclosed – advances have been made with the four-litre turbodiesel V6



Audi's (r)evolution

Rocked but reinvigorated by defeat in last year's World Endurance Championship, Audi has given its R18 e-tron quattro a ground-up makeover in a bid to stay on top at Le Mans and take the fight to Toyota and Porsche in the six-hour races, reports **GARY WATKINS**

HYBRID SYSTEM

The goal of moving to the 4MJ hybrid class – up from 2MJ – has been achieved with a single retrieval system

SUSPENSION

Audi has addressed the mechanical issues that prevented it from unlocking tyre performance in cool conditions

AERODYNAMICS

The latest R18 has undergone significant aero development that is readily apparent with its new look

BRAKE BY WIRE

The R18 can carry the brake-by-wire-system that ran on its predecessor at last year's WEC finale

Audi looked like a wounded giant at the end of last year's World Endurance Championship. It might have triumphed in the Le Mans 24 Hours and kept the title race open to the penultimate round in Bahrain, but it was outgunned on the Tilke dromes that made up much of the second leg of the series. Now it is back with a major update of its R18 e-tron quattro, and a real confidence that it will be in the fight for the WEC titles as well as a 14th victory in the race that really matters in France on the middle weekend of June.

Audi's reaction to a season in which it was only truly competitive at three of the eight WEC races – the two it won, at Le Mans and Austin, and the season opener at Silverstone – with a root-and-branch overhaul of the R18. The new shape of the car indicates a major aerodynamic overhaul, while the target of moving up one megajoule class on hybrid power has been achieved. That means the latest R18 will now run in the division that allows for 4MJ of retrieved energy to be deployed over the long 8.47-mile Circuit de la Sarthe at Le Mans rather than the lowest 2MJ category (and a percentage thereof for the regular tracks).

The failures of the second half of 2014 only provided extra motivation to improve the R18 for the coming season and get back on terms with eventual champion Toyota and ever-improving returnee Porsche, according to Audi Sport boss Wolfgang Ullrich.

"It was a difficult second half of the season but we managed to use that to bring everyone closer together," he says. "There was no finger pointing, no accusing; we just collected everything that we wanted to change for this year and pushed like hell to make it happen. It was push, push, push all winter long. What happened at the end of last year was good motivation."

EVOLUTIONARY STEP

Audi hasn't built a new car, as Porsche has done, but it's gone for the next best thing. It has undertaken a complete overhaul of the R18 e-tron quattro. So much so that the only carbon components carried over from the new-for-2014 car are the monocoque and the gearbox casing.

"The structural spine of the car is the same, so it's an evolutionary step that builds on the potential of last year; we were able to dig deep into the areas that showed that potential," explains Christopher Reinke, who manages the R18 project in his capacity as technical project leader of LMP1 at Audi Sport.

Reinke points out that last year's R18, the generic name for Audi LMP1 prototypes these days, was Audi's first stab at building a car to the new efficiency-based P1 rulebook. That left room for development, but at the same time a new design was never a possibility for reasons of resource, both financial and technical.

"It was always the plan to continue on the base of the '14 car," says Ullrich.

HYBRID POWER INCREASE

Audi has achieved its goal of moving into the 4MJ division with a single hybrid system. The latest R18, like its predecessor, retrieves and deploys power only from the front-axle kinetic system, *de rigueur* for all the manufacturers running in P1 today.

The hybrid system is all new, but, says Reinke,



Sebring test was big step for Audi in getting back on terms with Toyota and Porsche

"IT WAS PUSH, PUSH ALL WINTER. WHAT HAPPENED IN 2014 WAS GOOD MOTIVATION"

AUDI SPORT BOSS WOLFGANG ULLRICH

"based on the same concept" as last year, which means one motor generator and a differential rather than the two front units of the 2012-13 e-tron quattro. The flywheel energy-storage system has been further developed by automotive components company GKN, the new owner of its manufacturer, Williams Hybrid Power. Reinke says that the "project was taken on in a very professional way by the new owners



and the partnership continues as before".

Audi's upgrade of its hybrid systems has been evolutionary in the same way as its approach to the rest of the car, according to Reinke. "The correct approach was to take it step by step to have a well-sorted 2MJ system for last year and a clear road map very early to upgrade this system in an evolutionary way to this year's 4MJ system," he explains. "It was the more efficient

EVOLUTION OF THE SPECIES



Andre Lotterer (r), with team-mate Marcel Fassler, is impressed by changes

way to upgrade the existing system to 4MJ rather than introducing a second system.”

Reinke said that other hybrid technologies are “constantly under evaluation”, but a reintroduction of the turbo-driven system, akin to a Formula 1 Motor Generator Unit-Heat unit, was never on the cards. Audi originally announced that the 2014 R18 would run an MGU-H before dropping the system because it ▶



GIBSON/LAT

2011

R18 TDI

The open-top concept that brought Audi success with the R8, R10 and R15 is abandoned due to sporting regulations that increase the length of pitstops, cancelling out a disadvantage of coupes. The car retains the TDI suffix of its turbodiesel predecessors and gives Audi a 10th Le Mans victory and another success in the Sebring 12 Hours at the start of 2012, the relaunch event of the WEC.



KALISZ/LAT

2012

R18 E-TRON QUATTRO & R18 ULTRA

Audi takes a conservative approach on the introduction of hybrid technology. It builds two versions of the R18 around a new monocoque: the e-tron quattro with front-axle energy recovery; and a non-hybrid version called the ultra. The ultra wins on the debuts of the cars at Spa, but the e-tron quattro triumphs at Le Mans and in the WEC. The ultra is abandoned before the end of the season.



STALEY/LAT

2013

R18 E-TRON QUATTRO

The e-tron quattro concept is further refined around the monocoque of the 2012 car. Audi ups the power from its twin front-axle motor-generator units, introduces a carbon gearbox casing, and uses exhaust gases to create virtual skirts to seal the air moving through the diffuser. The car allows Audi to maintain its stranglehold on Le Mans and gives it a second WEC title.



BLOXHAM/LAT

2014

R18 E-TRON QUATTRO

Audi's take on the new P1 rules retains the name of its predecessor despite being an all-new car. The redesigned, single-turbo V6 diesel powerplant is increased in capacity from 3.7 to four litres. Audi announced that the car would run a turbo-driven MGU-H recovery system, but this is dropped ahead of the season. The new car wins at Le Mans, but Audi can't retain the WEC.



2015

R18 E-TRON QUATTRO

The second-generation R18 undergoes a massive overhaul around the same monocoque as its predecessor. The aerodynamics are all new. It sticks with a single hybrid system but moves up from the 2MJ to 4MJ energy class. Early testing proves successful and Audi has high hopes that the revised car will allow it to fight for the WEC titles against Toyota and Porsche.



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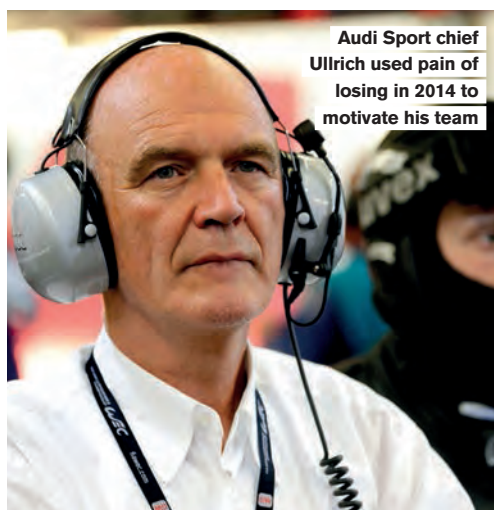
▶ didn't yield the expected gains and compromised the weight distribution of its turbodiesel contender.

The move to 4MJ means that Audi has more than 200kW of electric boost available through its front wheels. That compares with the ultimate power capacity of 170kW last year.

Three-time Le Mans winner Andre Lotterer, who is again teamed with Benoit Treluyer and Marcel Fassler in 2015, says that the drivers can really feel the difference. "The extra boost is quite noticeable," says Audi's talisman driver. "We have a bigger boost and boost, for longer as well.

"You can really feel the benefit of the four-wheel drive now, especially at somewhere like Sebring. Out of Turn 17, the rear of the car used to step out over the bumps. Now we don't have to worry: you floor it, the car jumps and off you go. It's pretty cool that our sportscars are doing four-wheel drifts."

Ullrich admits that 4MJ is "the maximum we can do with the current concept". That is as good as confirmation that Audi will abandon the flywheel in future years if it pushes beyond 4MJ. Ullrich is already talking about the use of "road-relevant technologies", which is a clear hint that it will swap to batteries in the same way that German rival Porsche has done.



**Audi Sport chief
Ullrich used pain of
losing in 2014 to
motivate his team**

AERODYNAMIC GAINS

The all-new aero of the 2015-specification R18 is evident from the photographs of the car undertaking its second test at Sebring earlier this month. The wholesale changes include the nose, which incorporates the front crash structure and has therefore necessitated the car passing a new crash test. The rear bodywork extends to the full length of car, as on the Le Mans version in

previous seasons, as a result of a rule change that mandates that rear-impact cones be covered.

The Audi has so far run in the aerodynamic configuration in which it will start the season at Silverstone in April and Spa in May. It's not talking in terms of high- and low-downforce specifications, although has confirmed there will be a new aero package for Le Mans. Rather, Reinke is promising a different approach to 2014.

"I see us being more flexible than last year," he explains, "but what configuration we will run where isn't decided yet."

Audi believes that a higher-downforce approach – it ran more than its rivals in both sprint and Le Mans-spec last year – is the way to go. Reinke reveals that its simulations maintain that this is correct for what he calls "overall laptime optimisation".

SUSPENSION CHANGES

The 2014 Audi struggled to unlock performance from its Michelin tyres on occasion last season, most notably at Fuji in October. Audi Sport Team Joest boss Ralf Juttner admits that "we were sometimes weak in getting mechanical grip and getting the tyres in their operating window". Early testing at Motorland Aragon in Spain and at Sebring suggests this has been overcome. "We think we've addressed that problem," he adds. ▶



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Testing has taken place in Spain and, pictured, at Sebring



XPB IMAGES

ROCKY'S RETURN

Mike Rockenfeller, Le Mans 24 Hours winner in 2010 and Audi's most recent DTM champion (2013), will make a step towards a full-time role in the prototype squad this year. The German, who hasn't raced an LMP1 since 2012, will be reserve driver for the World Endurance Championship blue-riband at Le Mans in June.

It was perhaps an obvious choice for a manufacturer needing to replace Nissan-bound Marc Gené, who was called upon to fill in for Loic Duval after the Frenchman's monster accident in practice for the 24 Hours last year. But it came at the suggestion of Rocky himself.

Audi Sport head Wolfgang Ullrich reveals that Rockenfeller was offered the chance to return full-time to the LMP1 squad to fill the seat, now taken by Oliver Jarvis, vacated by the retiring Tom Kristensen alongside Duval and Lucas di Grassi. He also suggests that one day Rocky will be a regular member of the P1 squad for the first time since his successful bid on the Le Mans Series with Alexandre Premat in 2008.

"He's a young man who's already won Le Mans, so there is nothing to prove for him," says Ullrich. "He knows that if he stays with us, he will always be welcome in the programme."

"There was an opening with Tom's retirement, but he decided to again concentrate on the DTM. But he also said, 'OK, but why couldn't I be the spare driver?', and that is what is happening. It makes sense because he knows Le Mans and he will be involved in our test programme, so he will also know the car."

Rockenfeller, 31, reckons it wasn't the right time to turn his back on the DTM and pursue his love of endurance racing, something he will indulge this weekend when he turns out in the Spirit of Daytona Coyote-Chevrolet Corvette DP in the Sebring 12 Hours.

"I'm in a good position in the DTM and I think my chances will be good this year," says Rockenfeller, who is about to embark on his ninth season in the DTM. "It is my goal is to race in the WEC one day, but right now I wanted to continue in the DTM."



Rockenfeller last raced an Audi LMP1 in 2012

KALISZTAT



Juttner is confident of getting closer to Toyota and Porsche at bogey tracks

"I'M SURE WE WILL HAVE REDUCED THE GAP TO RIVALS, IF NOT COMPLETELY CLOSED IT"

TEAM JOEST BOSS RALF JUTTNER

► **WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH THE RULES?**

Nothing, at least until after Le Mans. The Equivalence of Technology between turbodiesel technology and petrol power is set in stone until then, despite Audi's lobbying. Its arguments for a change ahead of this season were rebuffed by the rulemakers and its rivals at a meeting at last season's WEC finale at Interlagos in Brazil.

CAN AUDI COMPETE AT ALL CIRCUITS?

Audi believes the answer is yes, even if Toyota and Porsche move from six to 8MJ with their respective TSo40 HYBRID and 919 Hybrid challengers. (Both are due to announce the technical specifications of their 2015 cars the day before the official WEC test at Paul Ricard on March 27/28.)

That would maintain the 4MJ gap between them and Audi, but Juttner claims that this means a narrowing of the deficit: "Last year we had 33 per cent of their megajoules and, even if they reach eight, it will still mean that we have 50 per cent. Also, we question whether it would be possible to harvest [energy] up to the higher limit at all the tracks across the season."

Audi's focus is still on Le Mans – just as it has been in every season of the prototype adventure that started back in 1999 – where it will run an

additional car for Marco Bonanomi, Filipe Albuquerque and Rene Rast, but it believes it can compensate for the lack of hybrid punch where it really tells on the stop-start circuits of the second half of the WEC calendar.

Juttner talks about "challenging" Toyota and Porsche at places such as Fuji, Shanghai and Bahrain, tracks where the R18 was not competitive last year, rather than winning races.

"I believe that we will struggle at some circuits," he explains. "But, with the new hybrid system and the steps we have made with the rest of the car, I'm sure we will have reduced the gap, if not completely closed it. We believe we can be within striking distance, which was not the case at some tracks last year."

Reinke echoes Juttner's sentiments, but is perhaps a little more gung-ho about the season. "I honestly believe – it is more than a hope – that we have addressed the weaknesses of the car and therefore we will be much stronger generally," he says. "We're not going to win every race and I doubt with the competition level we have in WEC that anyone is going to do that."

"Our target is to win the WEC as well as Le Mans. We believe we have the right equipment to achieve that over the full season – and to do that we are not going to have to win every race."



ROB HUFF'S LOW-COST RISE

The 2012 World Touring Car champion says he never had the money to race cars. Yet 2015 is his 11th season in the WTCC. He talks **STUART CODLING through his journey from motorsport fan to paid professional – for little more than £100,000**



2015 CHAMPIONSHIP CALENDAR

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| SILVERSTONE GP | 25th April |
| BRANDS HATCH GP | 9th May |
| THRUXTON | 13th/14th June |
| SPA FRANCORCHAMPS | 26th to 28th June |
| DONINGTON PARK | 4th/5th July |
| OULTON PARK | 22nd August |
| SILVERSTONE GP | 13th Sept |
| BRANDS HATCH | 24th/25th October |

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They say the fastest way to make a small fortune in motor racing is to start off with a large one. It's a cliché no less true for being oft repeated; scan the entry list of last weekend's Australian Grand Prix and you'll note that half the drivers on the grid either bring a budget or have had their careers substantially underwritten by a certain energy-drink sugar daddy.

Factor in the plethora of 'test' and 'development' drivers whose backers have paid handsomely for them to – in effect – hang out in the paddock, and that proportion increases massively.

It doesn't have to be so. A driver *can* reach world championship level without spending ridiculous amounts in the process. At AUTOSPORT we believe that 2012 World Touring Car Champion Rob Huff may have been the most cost-efficient driver to have reached the top of their profession in recent years, helped earlier in his career by winning crucial scholarships on merit. And he continues to earn a decent salary for his racing.

As it happens, the Huff family has audited its spend on his career; and, while the total amount is rather more than you could expect to find down the back of the sofa (we estimate it as not far over £100,000), the complete journey from karting rookie to salaried pro cost less than the budget for one season in entry-level single-seaters.

"It's just into six figures," Huff says. "This is what we've spent as a family from day one of karting, the £25 here, the 150 quid there. It's all been noted throughout, all been documented. I'm not even sure why we know what it is. We've been lucky and we've had a lot of help along the way."

Though he raced karts in his youth, Huff – unusually for a professional driver at this level – did not venture into Europe, or even race two-stroke karts at all. He progressed, as he explains, through a combination of happy accident and enthusiasm.

"My passion for motorsport was very much installed in me by my father, Peter, as a young child," he says. "He was a huge fan of motorsport, always has been. He and a load of his friends would go to Le Mans each year. Dad knew Will Hoy because they were in the same business [chartered surveyors], so we would go to some British Touring Car races. Dad had another friend who was racing in Group C.

"When I was 10, I was old enough to get in a kart, at the Anglia indoor centre down in Ipswich. At the end of the day, we all did a race and I won it. The guy running the day was called Jason, and he pulled dad to one side and said, 'I think your boy might have something here'.

"My family have never had motorsport money but my dad has been successful in his career, and he could afford to take me karting. We started doing a lot of indoor karting and the natural progression was to outdoor karting. And so we started off doing the twin-engined ProKart stuff at Milton Keynes, at PF International, Buckmore Park... When I was around 16 we bought our own



Dad Peter, aka Huff Daddy, has been a huge influence

one and we starting 'Huffing Racing'.

"All I ever raced was twin-engine karts. We didn't know of this two-stroke, 100cc TKM stuff; we knew nothing about motorsport other than my dad being a fan. We did it because dad loved it, I loved it, and it was father-and-son time on a weekend. I think I just did a year in that before I got asked by one of the works teams to go and race for them. When I was 17 years old I was being paid to race a ProKart."

Though ProKarts are less agile than their two-stroke brethren, the endurance-race format offered plenty of seat time and opportunities to develop racecraft in a tightly contested category, surrounded by manufacturer teams. Winning an Ironman event at Daytona earned Huff the prize of a test in a Formula Jedi at Donington Park, and the chance to experience a racing car on a large-scale track for the first time.

For his 18th birthday Huff's parents bought ▶

"My family have never had motorsport money but my dad was successful and took me karting"



Huff and the Lada Vesta are a competitive force in the WTCC already



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2003: title victory in the SEAT Cupra Cup led to... SEAT Cupra Championship

JAKOB EBREY



...BTCC ride with works SEAT squad in 2004

GRIFFITHS/LAT



RML/Chevy deal came for reborn WTCC series in '05

SPINNEY/LAT

► him a one-week intensive course at the legendary Jim Russell racing school, which led to a scholarship to run in what would become the final Formula Vauxhall Junior Championship. Huff won four rounds – including the first two – to lift the title, joining a roster of champions that includes Dario Franchitti, Antonio Pizzonia and Gary Paffett. Huff's team-mate Joey Foster would go on to win the Walter Hayes Trophy Formula Ford 1600 showpiece three times.

Huff also raced a historic MGB owned by John Wilsher in the BCV8 Championship, courtesy of the extended friends-and-family network. His parents found the wherewithal to place him in the four-round Formula Palmer Audi Winter Series at the end of 2000, where he raced against, among others, future works BMW sportscar racer Joey Hand. Eventual champion Phil Giebler progressed to A1GP and Indy Lights, and qualified for the Indy 500 in 2007.

“We started thinking, “This is getting a bit serious now,” says Huff. “Kimi Raikkonen had just won Formula Renault and gone to Formula 1, so the next thing on the list was Formula Renault. We managed to somehow get half the budget together, mainly through my father and his friends and contacts. Two of his very good friends helped me a lot. But we only had half the budget, and halfway through the season it was all over.



Historic fun came in friend's MGB

JAKOB EBREY

“There was no opportunity to raise [more] budget because we just don't come from the background where that's possible. We knew no one in motorsport; this was all just my dad steering the ship the way that he could. Even at this point, there was no real thought that this could be a career. We were doing this as a family, as father and son, nice weekends out, just a bit of fun. And it made it even more fun when you were doing well.

“I think it was my sister, who for some random reason was reading a car magazine and found a scholarship, bearingdriver.com, which was set up by Tim Sugden. Off the top of my head, it was £600 to enter and 1000 people entered. After the elimination process, I was very luckily the last man standing.”

The prize was a full season in the Renault Clio Cup UK, which had provided success on the way to the British Touring Car Championship ►

“We did it as a family, as father and son, just a bit of fun. It was more fun when we were doing well”



Running ahead of dominant Citroën in WTCC opener in Argentina recently

XPBIMAGES



World Touring Car title came in final year with RML-run Chevrolet in 2012

► for John Bintcliffe (and, during a four-year interregnum with Renault Sport Spider weaponry, Jason Plato, Dan Eaves and Andy Priaulx). The 2002 season was a vintage one for the series and featured Andrew Kirkaldy, Daniel Buxton, Martin Byford, Daniel Stilp and Paul Rivett.

“There were some good names in that championship,” says Huff. “It was a full grid. In my first-ever year of saloon cars we finished third in the championship. It was a tough year and I really learned a lot.

“About halfway through that season, SEAT announced the new Cupra Championship that they were doing – one make, all run by the same team under one roof. It was £75,000 to enter.

“I owe a lot to dad on that one because between us we worked really hard, and we came up with all of the money. He put in a big chunk, we did some really good stuff with sponsorship and got a lot of people involved. That was the biggest amount of money we ever raised ourselves. I was the first person to sign up for the Cupra Championship and I just kept telling myself every single day, ‘I’m going to win this... I’m going to win it.’ I knew it was my last chance of being able to go anywhere after that.

Huff’s determination saw him through to victory in the championship, with the prize of a

COULD IT BE DONE AGAIN TODAY?

Following Rob Huff’s remarkably frugal climb to prominence certainly looks like a challenge in the present day. Single-seater budgets have escalated wildly, killing off some series entirely, although the new MSA Formula for 2015 looks promising, especially with a minimum age limit of 15 to attract karters.

While that expands the pool of potential entrants, finding the necessary money has never been harder. In the absence of scholarships such as those Huff was able to make use of, most up-and-coming drivers have had to rely on family money.

“Let me show you something,” he says, unfastening his watch. It’s a Chevrolet. He flips it over and gestures at the motto etched on the backplate. “See that? It was Louis Chevrolet’s

motto: ‘Never give up.’ There was no way I was ever going to find the money to go touring car racing, yet this is my 11th year in the WTCC.

“If I’d had the money, I would have stayed with RML [for 2013, post-Chevrolet]. I read an article when Yvan Muller re-signed with RML to run in the Lukoil car that RML kept him because he was the best driver. That was the biggest load of horseshit I’ve ever heard. They kept him because he had some sponsors. It still amazes me how the privateers here manage to do it – it’s more of a job to find the money than it is to drive the car.

“There’s no doubt motorsport is a tough world, but I’ve done it on a wing and a prayer. I could give you a list of 300 people I should be thanking for helping me along the way...”

Huff’s come full circle, helping small marque Lada to make waves

“I feel privileged and proud Chevrolet chose me. To repay them with the title was a proud moment”

works SEAT BTCC drive with RML, a salary of £30,000, use of a flat in Monaco, and Jason Plato as a team-mate.

“At that point,” he says, “I thought, ‘Wow, I could make a living out of being a racing driver.’”

By his own admission, Huff’s first year in the BTCC was difficult (“Finding the limit is not easy and when you do find the limit it tends to end badly”), and there were plenty of mistakes, but he won at Brands Hatch and Snetterton and finished seventh in the championship. It was enough to squeeze in to RML’s new project, running the Chevrolet Lacetti in the World Touring Car Championship.

“Ray Mallock and Eric Neve [Chevrolet’s motorsports boss] called me and I signed a three-year contract with them. I was lucky that Ray liked me as a person, and Chevrolet wanted a young driver – they’d already got [Alain] Menu and [Nicola] Larini and they

wanted an up-and-comer to support.

“I feel very privileged and proud that they chose me, because eight years later, to be able to repay them with the world championship was a very proud moment.”

Huff’s title triumph in 2012 was tinged with the knowledge that Chevrolet was withdrawing from the WTCC and RML would require drivers with budget from then on. He considered selling shares in himself – as Justin Wilson once did – but “it was a lot easier to find five or six million quid to put yourself in an F1 car than to find five or six hundred grand to go touring car racing.”

Fortunately privateer Rene Munnich fancied the notion of having the number one in his stable, and signed a one-year deal with Huff for 2013. At the end of the season a chance conversation with James Thompson opened the door to another salaried drive, this time with Lada. Team boss Viktor Shapovalov’s plans involved first



Racer/team boss Ray Mallock believed in Huff

expanding to a three-car entry, then fielding a new car. All the signs are that the new Vesta is the most competitive Lada yet. Huff has, indeed, led a charmed career; this period feels less like a coda than a reboot.

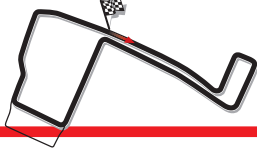
“I had probably the most enjoyable year of my life last year,” he says. “And suddenly everything seems to have evolved 30 years overnight. We’re going to properly show them the way this year!”



Formula E



Miami (USA)
March 14



Round 5/10

RESULTS

39 laps, 52.562 miles

| | |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1 NICOLAS PROST (F) | 46m12.349s |
| Team e.dams Renault; Grid: 2nd-1m06.167s | |
| 2 SCOTT SPEED (USA) | +0.433s |
| Andretti Autosport; Grid: 10th-1m06.527s | |
| 3 DANIEL ABT (D) | +5.518s |
| Audi Sport Abt; Grid: 4th-1m06.255s | |
| 4 JEROME D'AMBROSIO (B) | +5.941s |
| Dragon Racing; Grid: 8th-1m06.502s | |
| 5 NELSON PIQUET JR (BR) | +6.426s |
| China Racing (Campos); Grid: 7th-1m06.003s* | |
| 6 ANTONIO FELIX DA COSTA (P) | +8.754s |
| Amlin Aguri; Grid: 16th-1m07.678s | |
| 7 LOIC DUVAL (F) | +9.498s |
| Dragon Racing; Grid: 18th-1m09.454s | |
| 8 SAM BIRD (GB) | +19.817s |
| Virgin Racing; Grid: 3rd-1m06.170s | |
| 9 LUCAS DI GRASSI (BR) | +20.631s |
| Audi Sport Abt; Grid: 6th-1m06.424s | |
| 10 SALVADOR DURAN (MEX) | +24.587s |
| Amlin Aguri; Grid: 12th-1m06.888s | |
| 11 JAIME ALGUERSUARI (E) | +43.883s |
| Virgin Racing; Grid: 9th-1m06.503s | |
| 12 NICK HEIDFELD (D) | +47.878s |
| Venturi (Signature); Grid: 19th-1m06.510s** | |
| 13 SEBASTIEN BUEMI (CH) | +1m04.587s |
| Team e.dams Renault; Grid: 13th-1m07.037s | |
| 14 KARUN CHANDHOK (IND) | +1m23.539s |
| Mahindra Racing (Carlin); Grid: 20th-1m07.223s** | |
| 15 JARNO TRULLI (I) | -1 lap |
| Trulli (Super Nova); Grid: 14th-1m07.163s | |
| 16 VITANTONIO LIUZZI (I) | -1 lap |
| Trulli (Super Nova); Grid: 11th-1m06.836s | |
| 17 CHARLES PIC (F) | -1 lap |
| China Racing (Campos); Grid: 17th-1m08.243s | |
| 18 JEAN-ERIC VERGNE (F) | 37 laps-accident |
| Andretti Autosport; Grid: 1st-1m05.953s | |
| R STEPHANE SARRAZIN (F) | 31 laps-gearbox |
| Venturi (Signature); Grid: 5th-1m06.389s | |
| R BRUNO SENNA (BR) | 25 laps-suspension |
| Mahindra Racing (Carlin); Grid: 15th-1m07.283s | |

Winner's average speed: 68.254mph. Fastest lap: Piquet, 1m07.969s, 71.384mph. * = five-place grid penalty. ** = excluded from qualifying. All drivers in Spark-Renault SRT_01E.

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

| | | | |
|--------------------|-----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 1 PROST | 67 | 6 DA COSTA | 37 |
| 2 DI GRASSI | 60 | 7 D'AMBROSIO | 34 |
| 3 BIRD | 52 | 8 ALGUERSUARI | 26 |
| 4 PIQUET | 49 | 9 ABT | 19 |
| 5 BUEMI | 43 | 10 MONTAGNY | 18 |

TEAMS' CHAMPIONSHIP

| | | | |
|-------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|-----------|
| 1 E.DAMS-RENAULT | 110 | 4 ANDRETTI AUTOSPORT | 62 |
| 2 AUDI SPORT ABT | 79 | 5 DRAGON RACING | 56 |
| 3 VIRGIN RACING | 78 | 6 CHINA RACING | 49 |



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Victory came on 22nd anniversary of father's South African GP win



Prost proves he can go the extra mile

He kept his powder dry early on, then smoothly and steadily moved ahead in the late stages to win, proving that *la pomme* doesn't fall far from *l'arbre*. **GARY WATKINS** watched it happen

NICOLAS PROST KNEW HE WAS SITTING IN THE pound seats as he exited the pits right with race leader Daniel Abt. The e.dams driver was happy to cede position to his rival going into Turn 8, the right-hander after the pit exit that led onto the start straight, and then sit patiently behind the Abt Sportsline car, safe in the knowledge that he had one lap fewer to complete aboard his second Formula E Spark-Renault SRT_01E.

Prost's ability to do an extra lap of the 1.35-mile Miami ePrix street circuit in his first car ultimately proved decisive last weekend. Two laps from the end, Abt had to start conserving energy to make the finish and the Frenchman was able to move cleanly past into the lead. It wasn't plain sailing, however, for the championship frontrunner. He'd been followed past Abt by series debutant Scott Speed, who'd stopped at the same time, and had his mirrors full of the Andretti entry for the final lap and a half.

Six months on from losing victory in a crash at the final corner of the inaugural Formula E race in Beijing, Prost made it stick to become the fifth different winner in the first five rounds of the championship.

"When I came out of the pits and ended up side by side with Daniel, I wasn't too worried," explained Prost. "I knew I had one lap less to do than him and it had been a real struggle for me to do that extra lap in the first car — I had to lift a lot on my in-lap — so I knew he was always going to have a problem at the end of the race."

Prost's prediction proved bang on, though he was surprised to find Speed right on his tail almost from the moment he made it into the lead.

"The hardest thing was racing with 100 per cent power for the final laps when I'd been conserving energy since the beginning of the race," he explained. "I actually hit the wall with a couple of laps left, but luckily the car was OK."

The US proved once again to be a happy hunting ground for Prost, who'd run third behind pole winner Jean-Eric Vergne and Virgin driver Sam Bird through the opening stint. His previous two outright race wins came in the Petit Le Mans enduro at Road Atlanta with Rebellion Racing in the days when it was a round of the American Le Mans Series.

"I like racing over here," he said. "America is almost like a second home because I spent three years here studying at Columbia University [in New York]."

"Those victories at Petit are important to me, but this is a different feeling. I won with team-mates there, which feels good; here I have won on my own, which isn't a bad feeling either."

Abt knew he was in trouble as the 39-lap race



Frugality earned the win for Prost

I had two options: stay ahead and keep using full power or be sensible and make sure I finished

DANIEL ABT

in Miami drew to a close, and was powerless — quite literally — to do anything about Prost and Speed, so opted to settle for third.

"I had two options: stay ahead and keep using full power; or be sensible and make sure I finished by backing off," he said. "I knew I wasn't going to make it so I decided to play safe."

Speed was a revelation on his Formula E debut, though it should be remembered that he had always been part of Andretti's plans and took part in one of the pre-season tests at Formula E headquarters at Donington Park with the team.

The American, who moved over from Andretti Autosport's Global Rallycross Championship

squad, had lined up on the grid in 10th place after being baulked on each of his quick laps in qualifying. He moved up to ninth at the start and then vaulted to fifth behind team-mate Jean-Eric Vergne after the pitstops.

Speed quickly moved past his team-mate and then overtook a struggling Lucas di Grassi in the second Abt entry with four laps to go. That put him right on Prost's tail, but he wasn't able to attempt a pass. Not that he was too unhappy.

"To come from 10th on the grid in an open-wheel race isn't normally possible," he explained. "But the different strategies we are all running in Formula E means you can overtake."

Speed looks set to return to the Andretti line-up for the second US event in Long Beach next month. The team has yet to confirm its line-up for that race, but the need for Marco Andretti to focus on his IndyCar campaign means he is unlikely to be present in his father Michael's team.

Vergne, who will contest the remainder of the season with Andretti after joining the team in Uruguay, ended up non-finishing after locking up and heading down the escape road with a couple of laps to go. The former Toro Rosso Formula 1 driver had led all but 100 metres or so of his opening stint, despite a tap from Prost in the



Prost ran behind Vergne and Bird in opening stint

Scott Speed may have earned another call-up



MAUGER/LAT/FE

► first corner. He ended up fourth after swapping cars, but his race was unravelling courtesy of overheating as the finish approached and he was already down to seventh when he went off.

Di Grassi was another driver in trouble during the final laps. The championship leader coming into the weekend was running third behind team-mate Abt and Prost when his battery temperatures started to go up with seven laps to go. The loss of performance meant he slipped all the way down to ninth.

"I had enough energy left, but the battery temperature went up," said the Brazilian. "That meant I had no power and couldn't do anything at the end."

Jerome d'Ambrosio notched up Dragon Racing's best result of the season with fourth place from eighth on the grid. The Belgian, who was among the first wave of stoppers, reckoned he would have been on the podium had not a lapped Tonio Liuzzi in the second Trulli car not held him up in the closing stages.

There were a couple of stories of what might have been in Miami. Nelson Piquet Jr qualified second, just half a tenth behind poleman Vergne, but had to start seventh courtesy of a five-place grid penalty for a yellow-flag infringement the

We lost 12s in the pits and only finished 6s down at the end. It's clear we could have won

NELSON PIQUET JR

previous time out in Buenos Aires. The China Racing driver might still have won had his second car not failed to start cleanly when he jumped in during his pitstop.

Piquet had gone a lap longer than Prost in his first car and would have been right in the mix but for his delay. He dropped from seventh to ninth during the pitstop sequence, but still made it back to fifth by the chequered flag.

"We lost 12 seconds in the pits, passed four or five cars and only finished 6s down at the end," said Piquet, who also claimed fastest race lap. "It's clear that we could have won today."

Sam Bird, who was second in the points for Virgin Racing coming into the US leg of the championship, finished down in eighth. The Briton had overtaken leader Vergne on the lap that the Frenchman pitted, but his bid for victory ultimately fell apart with an attempt to complete an extra tour of the Miami circuit.

"The team told me to push and take the lead, which I did," explained Bird, "and it looked like we had enough energy left, but suddenly the level fell away in the space of 10 seconds and I had to back off dramatically."

Series newcomer Loic Duval finished seventh behind Buenos Aires winner Antonio Felix da Costa's Amlin Aguri car. The Frenchman was slowest in qualifying after his Spark-Renault had been inadvertently set up with race power rather than the higher level allowed, but overtook more

cars than anyone else in Miami. He made it up to 13th before the pitstops started, lost a couple of places and then continued his forward progress over the second half of the race.

Formula E's arrival on the streets of the USA – and motor racing's return to the Biscayne Bay area of downtown Miami – was delayed by nearly three hours on Saturday morning. Delays completing the ePrix circuit, which incorporated some of the same sections of Biscayne Boulevard used in the IMSA sports car, Trans-Am and CART track of 1986-95, forced a series of delays that eventually resulted in the two free practice sessions totalling 75 minutes being combined into a single half-hour session.

The problem was that Andretti Sports Marketing, which was contracted by Formula E to run the event, was "too neighbour-friendly", reckoned track general manager Tim Mayer.

"In an attempt to be responsible to the local community, we left an awful lot to do overnight between Friday and Saturday," explained Mayer, who previously worked for CART and the ALMS. "We were only given control of some sections of the track at 8pm on Friday and, in retrospect, that gave us too much to do. Maybe we bit off a little more than we could chew in that respect."

What Formula E ended up with was a first track without chicanes, and that proved very popular with the drivers.

Prost, for one, liked it. "It's a real American-style street course with some decent third-gear corners," he said, speaking before he won the race. "It's bumpy, of course, but we expect that."

Prost's victory last weekend came on the 22nd anniversary of father Alain's victory in the 1993 South African Grand Prix, which began his final title-winning campaign. That led to the inevitable questions about following in his dad's footsteps, but Prost batted them off with the same cool head that took him to victory in Miami.

"I just try to do my best in my career," said the 33-year-old, who now moves into the lead of the Formula E Championship. "I've had my name all my life." ❧

Abt had to back off during final laps



WARNER/LAT/FE

IN THE PADDOCK

GARY WATKINS
SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR
@gazzasportscars



THE FIRST MIAMI STREET RACE piqued my interest back as a motorsport-mad teenager back in 1983 and I was lucky enough to attend one of the American Le Mans Series/Champ Car double-headers in the city in 2003. That was one reason that I started looking into the rich history of racing in the Bayside area ahead of my trip last weekend.

The ePrix circuit was the fourth distinct track in downtown Miami after the original home of the Miami Grand Prix of 1983-85, the Bicentennial Park venue of 1986-95 and the short-lived ALMS/Champ Car venue of 2002-03.

The original and the 'noughties' tracks were more or less in the same place. Ditto the 1986-95 circuit and the ePrix venue. What I learned is that there was no overlap between those two sites even if sections of Biscayne Boulevard have been incorporated into all four layouts.

An ability to confirm that was the second reason for my pre-race research. I love going to new tracks and have a list of all I have visited. And a track by my definition means a venue, so that means I can now add one to my total with a clear conscience.

The exit for Watkins
Bayside nirvana?



MAUGER/LAT/FE

BIG NUMBER

163

The total number of permits, licences and authorisations required from local bodies for the Miami ePrix to go ahead.

No grandstands for London Formula E finale

SPECTATORS AT THE BATTERSEA

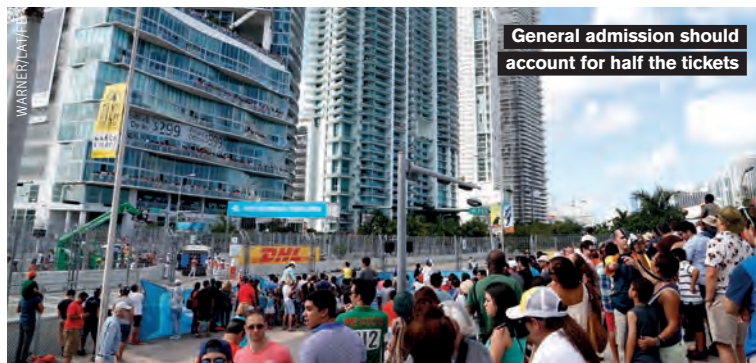
Park Formula E finale in June will stand on small terraces rather than sitting in grandstand seats.

The layout of the park militates against conventional grandstand seating because the trees in close proximity to the track interrupt sight lines, according to senior figures at Formula E. It has come up with an alternative of small terraces dotted between the trees on which spectators will stand rather than having allocated seating.

Series boss Alejandro Agag explained that plans for the first Formula E double-header event on June 27-28 were still fluid.

"Maybe we will have some seats, but the trees mean that we are looking more at having these platforms or terraces," he explained. "We can have 30,000 people each day in London, which will mean some people with general admission tickets walking around and others standing on the platforms."

Formula E operations and event manager Oli McCrudden said that it was envisaged that the attendance would be split roughly



fifty-fifty between those spectators on general admission and those with tickets for the platforms.

He revealed that there would also be "two or three giant TV screens" for spectators viewing in the park to watch the track action.

Agag discounted rumours that the Battersea race would not be open to the general public and that the attendance would be entirely made up of corporate

guests. He said that he expected the event to be sold out: "That is one of the reasons why we went to two days, because we knew that demand for tickets would be high."

An on-sale date for Battersea tickets and prices has yet to be announced.

The first ground works in the park, including the resurfacing of the car park and boules area that will become chicanes, has already started in Battersea Park.

One car per race is the goal

FORMULA E IS ON COURSE TO become an open formula in season five, when series boss Alejandro Agag wants one car to be able to complete the 45-minute races.

What Agag has labelled his "five-year road map" allows for development of the powertrains in 2015-16 and batteries in 2016-17, while mandating the use of the existing Spark-Renault SRT_01E

chassis. He concedes, however, that the principle of a one-make chassis will have to be abandoned to achieve the goal of one-car races in 2018-19.

"I believe we will be able to retain a single chassis for four seasons, but I don't think that will be possible if we are to stop needing two cars for each race," he said. "Teams will go for radical technologies, which means they will need their own chassis."



MAUGER/LAT/FE

US media groups boost stake

THE STAKE TAKEN IN FORMULA E by two allied US media groups this month makes them the biggest shareholder in the series, boss Alejandro Agag has admitted.

Liberty Global and Discovery Communications, both part of US media mogul John Malone's empire, bought in to Hong Kong-based Formula E Holdings last month. Combined, they now control a greater percentage of the company than

any of the other 11 shareholders, though they still have a minority stake.

Agag said that the investment secured the long-term future of Formula E.

"When you are discussing with big sponsors, they want to know that the championship is going to be here in two years, five years or 10 years," he said. "Two weeks ago, the answer to that was, 'We really hope so'; now the answer is, 'Yes!'"



MAUGER/LAT/FE

BUSMAN'S HOLIDAY

Vitantonio Liuzzi (above, left) was brought in to the Trulli line-up at the last minute after Michela Cerruti informed the team that she would not be completing the season. Liuzzi was holidaying in Miami when he received the call.

CHINA IN PIC'S HANDS

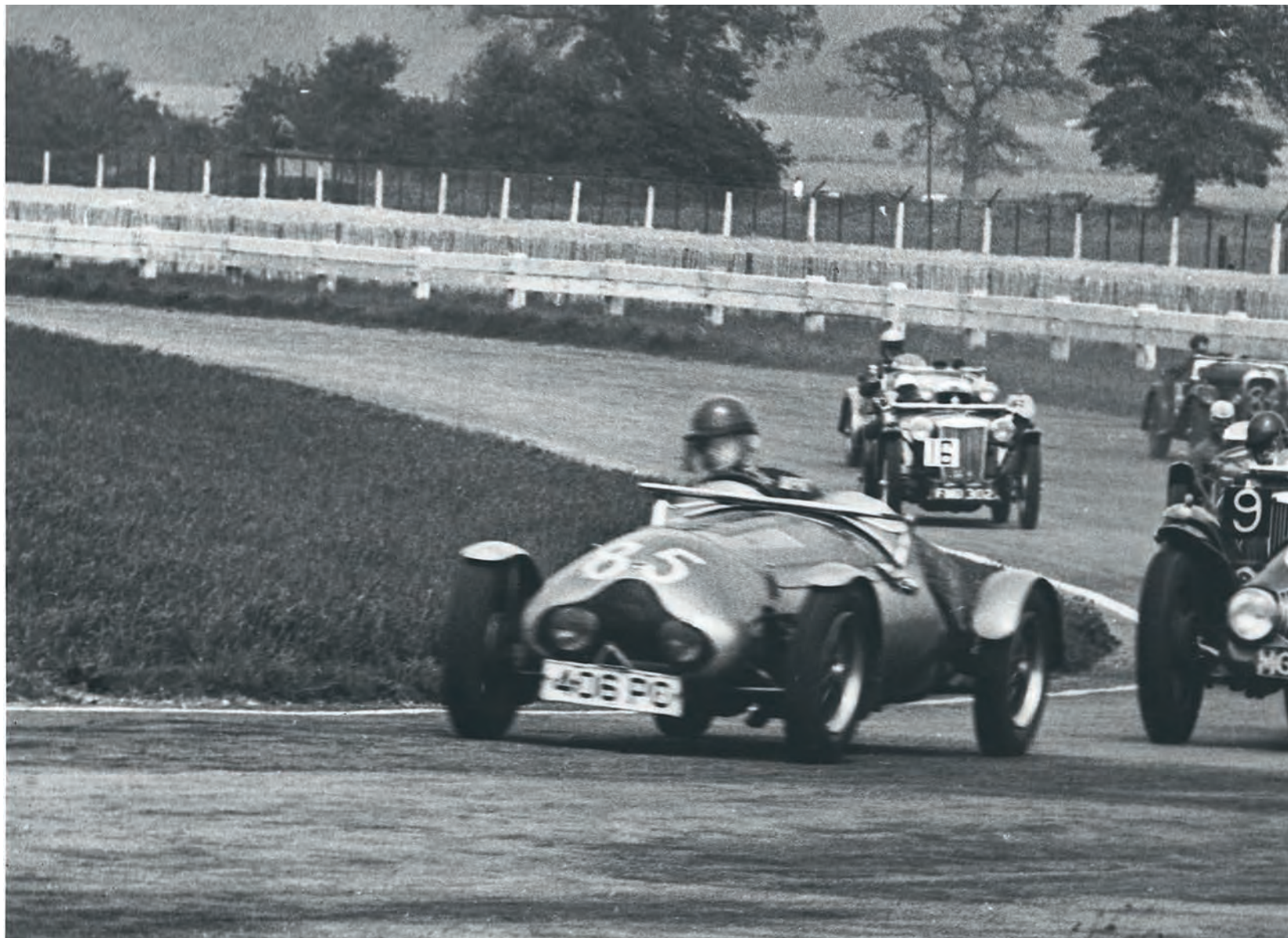
Charles Pic, who was brought into the Campos-run China Racing line-up in place of Ho-Pin Tung ahead of Miami, is likely to remain with the team for the remainder of the Formula E season.

TOUGHER SUSPENSION

Suspension upgrades for the Spark-Renault SRT_01E were introduced for Miami following failures at the Argentina round. The cars were fitted with new rear pushrods and new front wishbones.

IN-RACE VOTING

Formula E boss Alejandro Agag has revealed his desire for Fan Boost voting to take place during the early stages of each race rather than beforehand. "We are working on it, but the FIA is our regulator so we have to respect their opinion," he said. The governing body has so far ruled that in-race voting would be contrary to the International Sporting Code.



56

DOWN AT THE CLUB



The Goodwood Members' Meeting was revived last year and, after a successful comeback, returns this weekend.

MARCUS PYE reflects on what made it so significant

Unlike this weekend's second evocation of Goodwood's modern era, the British Automobile Racing Club's Private Members' Meetings organised between 1949 and the circuit's sudden closure in the summer of '66 were not grand, or flash in any way. In contrast to the promoted events, which became Easter, Whit and August Bank Holiday Monday traditions, these simple 'second-division' affairs enabled subscribers to maximise their privileges of affiliation and enjoy a good day out at the races.

Seventy-one of these 'clubbies', almost 60 per cent of the total number of events run on the former RAF Westhampnett perimeter track, whose potential for racing was suggested to the Duke of Richmond (1931 Brooklands Double Twelve winner Freddie March) by Australian airman Tony Gaze, allowed the well-heeled, or connected, to compete again. In a country freed from six years at war, the popular "run-what-you-brung" races, initially for sportscars, soon showcased a recovering motor industry.

Races were short and sharp, three and five-lappers to start with, many decided on a handicap basis. As seen before World War 2 at the defunct Brooklands, where HE 'Ebbey' Ebblewhite – who brought his slide-rule and stopwatches to Goodwood – was the

DID YOU KNOW?

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

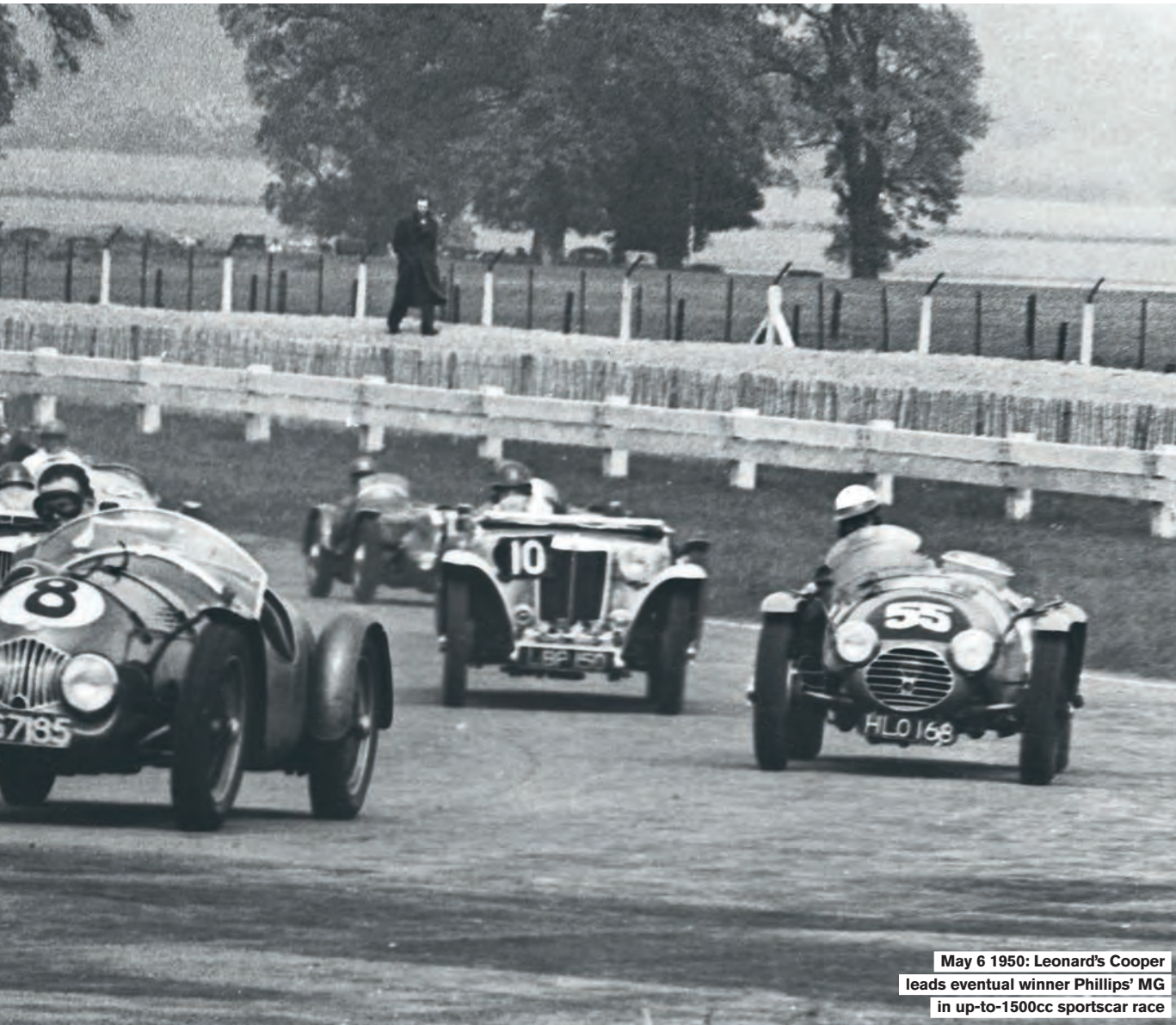
Nine years before scoring Porsche's first Le Mans win in a 917, Richard Attwood won a Members' Meeting Formula Junior race at Goodwood in 1961, driving a BRP Cooper T56.

TOTALLY AUTOMATIC

Future F1, F5000 and Can-Am star David Hobbs debuted in a Morris Oxford at Goodwood in 1959 and won in a Jaguar XK140 the following season. Both were test beds for family firm, Mechamatic automatic gearboxes.

REDMAN'S DEAD-HEAT

Triple US F5000 champ and sportscar hero Brian Redman raced a Mini 850 in the 30th MM of June 25 1960, finishing equal-14th.



May 6 1950: Leonard's Cooper leads eventual winner Phillips' MG in up-to-1500cc sportscar race

pre-eminent handicapper, competitors were despatched at intervals with the slowest (or limit) car setting off first and the quickest (scratch) last. By careful calculation of each combo's relative performances the aim was to have everybody finishing together in a mad dash for the chequered flag. While this happened rarely, if ever, everybody had an equal chance of winning. In theory at least...

From the first Members' Meeting on August 13 1949 to the last on July 2 1966, the range of cars that took to the 2.4-mile track was nothing if not eclectic. Len Gibbs (Riley Nine), Eric Thompson (HRG, twice), John Craig (Jaguar SS100), Rodney Clarke (Connaught L2), 'Dickie' Metcalfe (Fiat Balilla 508S), Dick Jacobs (MG TA Special), Guy Jason-Henry (driving Rob Walker's Delahaye 135M, which had raced at Le Mans pre-war) and Sydney Allard (Allard) won races on the all-handicap programme.

Among those who made history were Tony Needell (father of ex-F1 racer-turned-TV presenter Tiff, who shares Peter Mallett's Rover 3500 SDI at the 73rd), who finished eighth in a Ford V8 Coupe, 750 Motor Club founder Holland Birkett (Bugatti T44), Australian-born speedway promoter Digger Pugh in an HRG, Bristol Cars boss Tony Crook (BMW 328), talented special builder Derek Buckler, speed merchant Vic Derrington (Lancia Ardea), MG fanatic Geoff Coles (J2/J4 Special), Goodwood commentator James Tilling (Singer LM) and

Roy Pierpoint (Fiat), who in 1965 would become British Saloon Car champion in a Ford Mustang.

At first, novices were briefed to stay to the right of a line past the pit area, a straight run from Woodcote to Madgwick corners until the chicane was introduced in 1952. When mass-start scratch races were offered, grids were initially drawn by ballot and drivers excluded for spinning or putting 'all four wheels off' the course. Nothing's new, then? Saloons were added as manufacturers ramped up production to meet demand for smaller family cars in a growing market, but it was not until 1958 that

single-seaters were entertained at MMs.

The solitary 500cc Formula 3 event was won by Tommy Bridger (Cooper-Norton) from Trevor Taylor, Don Parker and Don Truman, known to legions of racers into the 1980s as the BRSCC Midlands Centre's super-fair clerk of the course. Following the 500 experiment, Formula Junior and 1000cc F3 were more frequent visitors in the '60s. Handicaps remained a feature throughout, '49 pioneer Metcalfe winning them at the last two MMs – including the final race of the era – in the black Lola-Climax Mk1 now owned and campaigned by Peter Rutt. ▶



Eric Thompson, here in HRG, won twice in the inaugural MM on August 13 1949

DID YOU KNOW?

OUT OF AFRICA

Ecurie South Africa's Tony Maggs and Louis Jacobz ruled the roost in the unsupercharged 1100cc sportscar race that opened the miserably wet 34th MM on April 25 1959, driving Lotus 11s. Maggs went on to become a Cooper F1 racer.

LITTLE AND LARGE

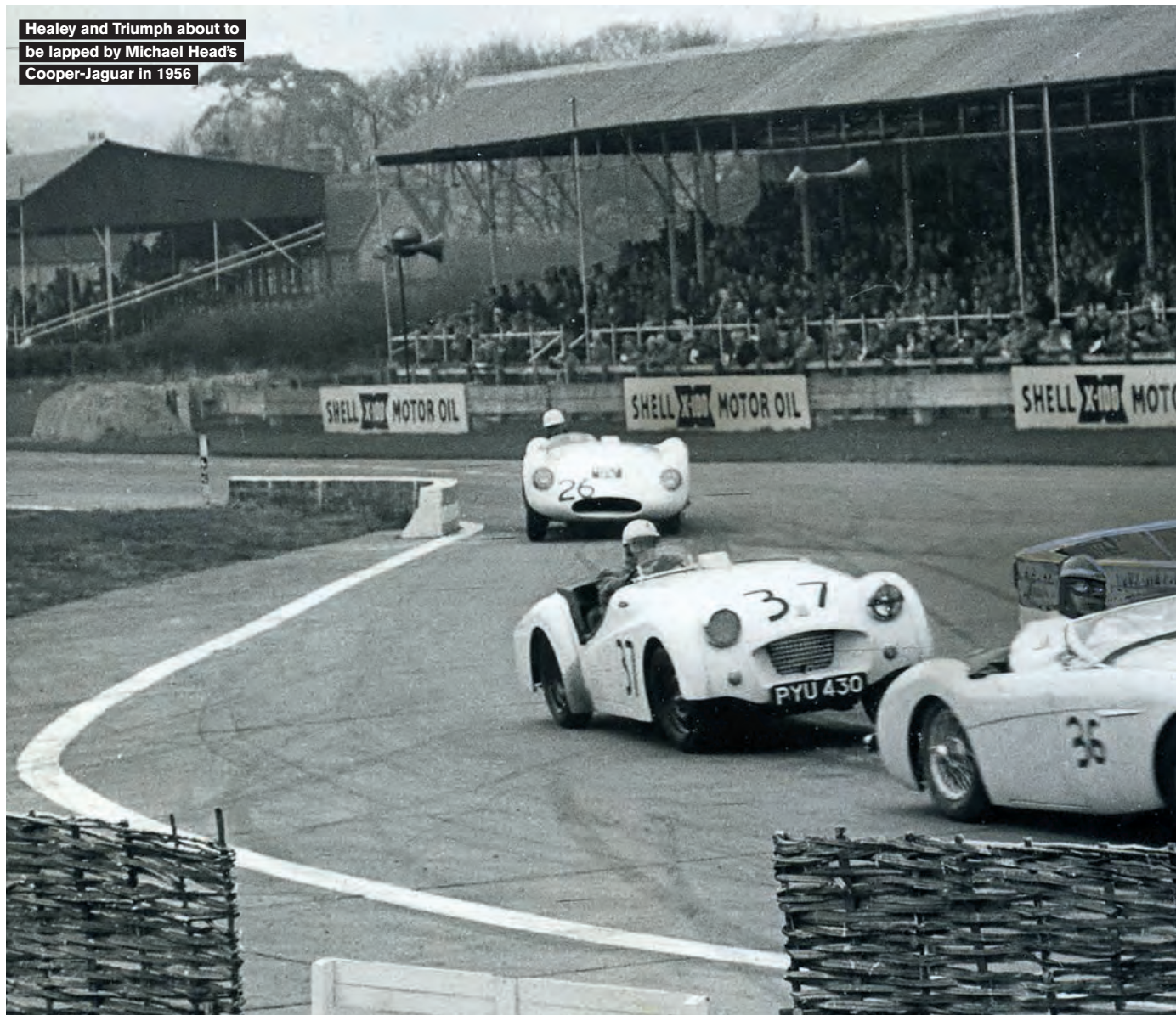
The smallest-capacity winners at Goodwood were 328cc Anzani-engined Berkeleys, driven by 'Jumbo' Goddard-Watts and the Ashbys, husband and wife, in 1957-58. The largest was N Powell's seven-litre Mercedes-Benz at the seventh MM on March 21 1953.

HYBRID HEAVEN

Doc Merfield scored two of his nine MM victories in his famous 'Fraud' Cortina V8, but hybrid saloons were no strangers to the winner's circle. Perhaps the most bizarre was the flat-four Jowett Javelin-engined Morris Minor of R Dore in 1956 and '57.



Healey and Triumph about to be lapped by Michael Head's Cooper-Jaguar in 1956



▶ A PLACE FOR FIRSTS

While most of the MM drivers were essentially weekend warriors, often tweed-jacketed amateurs or garagistes adept at tuning engines who drove their steeds to Chichester's eastern fringe, painted numbers on doors or windows in shoe white, adjusted crossply tyre pressures and raced for the hell of it, future Formula 1 world champions Mike Hawthorn, Jim Clark and Jackie Stewart were among the aspiring elite who furthered growing reputations and wowed knowledgeable spectators (the record attendance of whom was 8000-plus, although often it was

counted in hundreds) at Members' Meetings.

The dashing Hawthorn cut his racing teeth at Goodwood in Rileys, winning four times at MMs, first in an Ulster Imp and thrice in a TT Sprite run from his father's Tourist Trophy garage in Farnham and, at major meetings, in Bob Chase's Cooper-Bristol. His graduation to the top of the sport, with Ferrari in 1958, was rapid, but tragically he would not live more than a couple of months after winning his title.

Of many trends to emerge over 18 seasons of Members' Meetings, the inexorable rise of Colin Chapman's Lotus marque is embroidered as the principal theme in the team's vivid tapestry. Spearheaded by Chapman himself, who piloted an 1100cc MkVI to victories in five-lap races in the 13th and 14th MMs of July 25 and September 14 1953 respectively, no fewer than 73 Lotus drivers won 129 of the almost 600 races staged. No other marque came close.

Nine years after elder brother Jimmy won two races in a day in an Ecurie Ecosse Jaguar C-type, 'wee' Jackie matched him with David Murray's organisation in 1963, albeit in a Cooper-Monaco and a big Tojeiro-Buick coupe. The following season, having earned his single-seater break with Ken Tyrrell after a sensational test in a svelte Cooper-BMC at Goodwood, Jackie won the circuit's first major 1000cc F3 race at the start of a dominant British championship effort.

Spectators also witnessed notable firsts. Already a five-time world motorcycle champion



Action from a 1952 Members' Meeting shows addition of new chicane



MOST SUCCESSFUL DRIVERS (WINS)

9
Michael Head
Chris Lawrence
Derek 'Doc' Merfield

7
Innes Ireland
Bill de Selincourt
Chris Williams

6
Christopher 'Dickie'
Le Strange Metcalfe
Michael Taylor

5
Mike Beckwith
Tony Brooks
Cliff Davis
Jon Derisley
Hugh Dibley
David Eva
Keith Greene
Clive Lacey
Boley Pittard

4
George Abecassis
'Dizzy' Addicott
Rodney Banting
Colin Chapman
John Coombs
Tony Crook
Tommy Entwistle
Mike Hawthorn
Tony Hegbourne
Lawrence Mitchell
Oscar Moore
Tony Page
Mike Salmon
David Shale
Roy Watling-Greenwood



TOP 20 MARQUES (WINS)

| | |
|------------|------------------------|
| 129 | LOTUS |
| 45 | MG |
| 35 | JAGUAR |
| 23 | AUSTIN-HEALEY & AUSTIN |
| 22 | TRIUMPH |
| 19 | LOLA & MORGAN |
| 18 | FRAZER NASH |
| 17 | COOPER & FORD |
| 14 | RIELEY |
| 13 | BRABHAM |
| 12 | AC & ASTON MARTIN |
| 10 | DRW & MORRIS |
| 9 | HWM |
| 7 | HEALEY |
| 6 | ALLARD |

| EVENT 3 | | 10-Lap Scratch Race (B) (For Formula Junior Racing Cars) | | 3.10 p.m. | |
|---------|--|---|--------------|-----------|--|
| No. | Entrant and Driver | Car | Colour | e.g. | |
| 21 | A. C. B. Chapman (Driver: To be nominated) | Lotus | Green | 997 | |
| 22 | A. C. B. Chapman (Driver: J. Clark) | Lotus | Green | 997 | |
| 23 | A. C. B. Chapman (Driver: T. Taylor) | Cooper | Green | 994 | |
| 24 | K. Tyrrell (Driver: To be nominated) | Cooper | Green/White | 998 | |
| 25 | L. Hine | Cooper | Green | 994 | |
| 26 | J. L. Verner-Pack | Cooper | Green | 976 | |
| 27 | M. L. Spence | Cooper | Green | 994 | |
| 28 | J. Lawrence (Driver: L. J. Fagg) | Deep Sanderson | White/Green | 99 | |
| 29 | C. J. Lawrence | Deep Sanderson | Black/Silver | 99 | |
| 30 | C. R. Taylor | Evad | Black/Silver | 99 | |
| 31 | D. Puzey | Yimkin | Green | 9 | |
| 32 | O. Kine (Driver: Entrant or S. Chitty) | C.K. Special | Red | 9 | |
| 33 | D. Mason | Elva | White/Blue | 997 | |
| 36 | R. A. S. Ames | Elva | Green | 997 | |
| 37 | P. J. Arundell | Elva | White | 998 | |
| 38 | P. J. Addicott | Elva | White/Black | 99 | |
| 39 | D. G. Bradshaw | Elva | Green/White | 99 | |
| 40 | J. C. Boden | Elva | Green | 99 | |
| 41 | J. C. Boden | Elva | Green | 99 | |
| 42 | F. G. Konig | Scorpion | Silver | 99 | |

| EVENT 4 | | 10-Lap Marque Scratch Race (Le Mans-type Start) | |
|---------|--------------------|--|--------|
| No. | Entrant and Driver | Car | Colour |
| 1 | A.C. Bristol | A.C. Bristol | Blue |
| 2 | A.C. Bristol | A.C. Bristol | Blue |
| 3 | A.C. Bristol | A.C. Bristol | Blue |

in the 500cc and 350cc classes, John Surtees made a stunning four-wheeled racing debut, at 26, beating Team Lotus's rising star Clark to FJ pole at the 39th Members' Meeting on March 19 1960 and chasing the Scot home at the wheel of a Tyrrell-entered Cooper T52. That impressed 'Chunky' Chapman, for two months later 'Big John' was in one of his works F1 Lotus 18s on the streets of Monaco...

Staying on the Lotus theme, future factory driver Innes Ireland – who would score the equipe's maiden world championship victory in the 1961 United States GP on Watkins Glen's switchback – inked seven Goodwood MM victories on his CV, the first pair in 1955 and '56 in an 1100cc Brooklands Riley, the remainder in Lotus 11s of similar capacity. Alan Stacey, Mike Taylor and Peter Arundell also notched wins in 11s.

Team Lotus F1 racer Trevor Taylor had headed an FJunior pack home in March 1961 in an 18, while '70s teamster (now vehicle-dynamics guru) John Miles, who started his career in an Austin 7, won twice, driving the Diva GT in which he secured a national championship and a John Willment-entered Elan. Unforgiving Goodwood, with its devilish corners, was a place to be respected, one that sorted men from boys.

Five-time Le Mans 24 Hours winner Derek Bell, who lived close to Goodwood at Pagham, won his debut race there in a pal's Lotus 7 on

March 14 1964, and added a couple more MM wins to his card in F3 at the wheel of Type 31 and 41 over the following two seasons. Another local ace to start in a Seven was Peter Gethin.

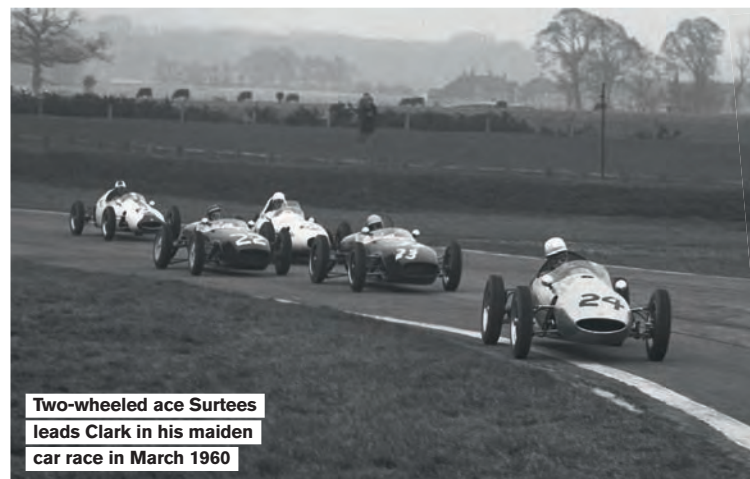
MORE THAN JUST A LOTUS LAUNCHPAD

Legendary team owner John 'Noddy' Coombs (in his Connaught-engined VI), F1 racers Tony Maggs of South Africa, Keith Greene and future (March and Arrows) F1 team partner Alan Rees all scored in 11s. Mark Konig – later to commission the Nomad sports-prototypes – was one of five drivers to score in a sweet-

handling Elite while, at the opposite end of the gruntometer, long-time Winfield Racing Drivers' School director Simon de Lautour wrestled a less wieldy Ford V8-motivated Type 30 to the chequer in the AUTOSPORT sportscar championship round in July '65.

Test pilot Dizzy Addicott's John Dabbs-built Buick V8-engined 15 (subsequently raced by Derek Pye, no relation) was both a crowd pleaser and a winner, as was the chassis' former owner David Piper in an MG-powered VI.

Among legions of less-well-known Lotus winners were Eric Oliver (1948 World Sidecar ▶



Two-wheeled ace Surtees leads Clark in his maiden car race in March 1960



DID YOU KNOW?

F3 WINNER RETURNS

Forty-nine years ago this week, at the 68th MM of March 19 1966, Chris Williams scored his breakthrough F3 win. Then black and gold, the Sherespeed Brabham BT18 is now white and gold and is racing at the 73rd MM with Jon Waggitt at the wheel.

QUICK ON THE DRW

David Warwick's little DRW marque punched above its weight, recording nine wins in Members' Meetings through Jack Murrell (three), James Manfield and Geoff Oliver (two), David Soley and John Bromilow (one). Bromilow won the first Clubmans race in 1966.

LE STRANGE BUT TRUE

Christopher 'Dickie' Le Strange Metcalfe, a Members' Meeting pioneer winner on August 13 1949 with a Fiat Balilla, won handicaps at the last two period MMs – including July 2 1966's finale – in the black Lola Mk1 now owned by Peter Rutt.



Collecting-area ambience, as seen on practice day in February 1959

► champion, with Murray Walker's father Graham in the chair) in an Elan and locally domiciled Jon Derisley. The latter bagged five golds between '59 and '62 in a Seven before graduating to a Formula Junior Type 20. His daughter Judy, a long-time competitor herself, has for many years been a senior Goodwood official.

Bill de Selincourt's seven MM trophies were achieved with five cars: a Lotus 11 (Peter Ashdown's car) giving way to a Triumph TR3 and ex-Peter Whitehead Lister-Jaguar BHL103, although he also won in a Lola Mk1 and a rear-engined Lotus 19 borrowed from John Coundley in 1963. A decade later, de Selincourt ran a Chevron B23 sports-prototype for numerous drivers including Jaguar E-type man John Quick, another period Goodwood victor, under the Ember Racing banner.

THE MEN WHO MASTERED THE MEMBERS' MEETING

In the final reckoning, after the Duke of Richmond and Gordon had closed the motor circuit's gates ostensibly for the final time on July 2 1966, to the disappointment of competitors and fans, it was fitting that drivers of three different genres of car topped the Members' Meeting winners' table. Sportscar

racer Michael Head, Morgan GT star and tuner extraordinaire Chris Lawrence and tin-top man Derek 'Doc' Merfield rode out with nine victories apiece.

Head – father of Patrick, Sir Frank Williams' partner in Williams Grand Prix Engineering and the team's genial designer and technical director – opened his account at the wheel of a Jaguar XK120 in the 7th MM of May 2 1953. He enjoyed a purple patch over the next three seasons, notching five, including two doubles, in his Jaguar C-type XKCo05 (registered MDU 212), one in a Ford Zephyr and the final pair in the Cooper-Jaguar T38 that sadly was biffed at last September's Revival.

Few could match Lawrence, the boffin who masterminded TOK 258's class victory at Le Mans in 1962, in a Triumph-powered +4. All but one of his nine successes came in traditional Morgans bearing that number, the other in one of the three aerodynamic SLR (Sprinzel Lawrencetune Racing) coupe evolutions in '66. Lawrence was no one-trick pony either, for he evolved the Deep-Sanderson cars (Formula Juniors and the coupes he took to Le Mans) and briefly made it to F1 in JA Pearce's ill-starred Cooper-Ferrari, incinerated with the Pearce-Martin V8s at Silverstone in '67.

Dental surgeon and Ford man Merfield won in Anglia 105Es of varying capacity, his V8-engined Cortina and Lotus-Cortinas, one from the resourceful Race Proved by Willment equipe. So rapid was 'Doc' that team-mate (and fellow Aussie) Brian 'Yogi' Muir – who tamed Ford Falcon, Chevrolet Camaro, BMW CSL and Rover SD1 V8 in his time – fell off giving chase!

Goodwood Members' Meetings worked on many levels, giving well-heeled folk the thrills they craved post-WW2, eager novices the opportunity to learn their craft and gauge their progress against established names in road cars of all ages and sizes – with handicaps levelling the playing field – and patrons the chance to try out young talent on a difficult circuit with a view to promoting them to their teams. They may have attracted many stars along the way but succeeded in being classless playgrounds, as their title suggested, for club members, the lifeblood of motor sport. ❧



John Miles (centre front) would win this sportscar thrash in '64 aboard Elan



73RD MEMBERS' MEETING

THE RACES

GERRY MARSHALL TROPHY

Group 1 Saloons 1970-82

Darren Turner and Stuart Graham (Chevrolet Camaros), Jochen Mass and Tiff Needell (Rover SDIs), Rob Huff and Nic Minassian (Ford Capris) and Anthony Reid and Tim Harvey (Triumph Dolomite Sprints) are among the targets for Jason Plato and Andrew Jordan (Minis) to humble in Sunday's colourful tin-top feature.

TAYLOR TROPHY

Formula Junior 1960-62

Representing 21 chassis and five engine marques, FJ's variety is peerless. Robert Barrie and Dan Collins yearn to mirror Jim Clark's 1960 Lotus 18 victory, but Sir John Chisholm (Gemini), Crispian Besley (Cooper), James Hicks (Caravelle) and Stuart Roach (Condor) have plausible claims to the Trevor Taylor prize.

HILL TROPHY

GT cars 1960-66

Named for '63-'64 TT winner Graham Hill, this 60-minute showcase sees a trio of Shelby Cobra Daytona Coupe evocations face AC Cobra, Aston Martin, Jaguar E-type, Bizzarrini, Maserati Tipo 151, Ferrari 'Breadvan' and Chevrolet Corvette opposition. Can the brace of three-wheeled Lotus Elan 26Rs get among them?

LES LESTON CUP

Production Sports Cars 1960-66

Period MM flashback featuring the type of cars that would have been driven to Goodwood. Morgan +4s had a great record, and Austin-Healey Sprites won regularly, but Lotus Elites and Elans, Turners and MGBs should fly in a field embracing Daimler SP250 (like Trevor Crisp's rare 1963 winner) and Rochdale Olympic.

SOPWITH CUP

Production Saloons 1952-60

Equipe Endeavour's Tommy Sopwith was an MM winner and, while there are no Armstrong-Siddleley Sapphires this time, the mix is eclectic. BTCC champion Robb Gravett (VW Beetle) and celebrities James Martin (Ford Prefect), Chris Rea (Morris Minor) and Peter James (BMW 502 V8) are in the Jaguar-topped posse.

DEREK BELL CUP

1000cc F3 cars 1964-70

Jackie Stewart won Goodwood's first big F3 race for the screamers in 1964, but Derek Bell's two MM victories in Lotuses are celebrated by a cracking 11-marque field. Top slipstreamers include Francois Derossi and James King (Chevrons), Roland Fischer (Tecno), Keith Messer (Vesey) and Ian Bankhurst (Alexis).

EARL HOWE TROPHY

GP cars 1925-39

Without 'pesky' ERAs to chase, Alfa Romeos, Bugattis and Maseratis gun for top honours in the Pre-War Grand Prix retrospective. Bentley, Frazer Nash, Mercedes-Benz and MG are represented too, alongside Thierry Chanoine's Riley Dobbs Special, Heinz Bachmann's lofty Buick Shafer 8 and the Richard Bolster Special.



JOHN ALDINGTON TROPHY

Porsche 911s, 1964-66

Thirty of the German icons, including rare early 901s, race for a trophy honouring their first UK importer. Le Mans winner and marque ambassador Richard Attwood drives Porsche Cars GB's entry. Oliver Bryant, Mark Sumpter, Mike Jordan and Chris Harris (in Take That's Howard Donald's) start among the favourites.

BRUCE McLAREN TROPHY

Sports Racing cars 1963-66

Brutal prototypes make a fabulous spectacle, with McLaren M1s and Lola T70 hordes – and flamboyant Canadian Jay Esterer's mighty Chinook – evoking Can-Am and USRRC memories. Watch too for the Cooper Monaco T61Ps of Keith Ahlers, Chris Jolly and Michael O'Shea with Ford, Chevrolet and Maserati V8 power respectively.

HAWTHORN TROPHY

Formula 1 & F2 cars 1952-59

Front-engined extravaganza remembering Great Britain's first F1 world champion, an MM winner in Rileys. Ferrari, Maserati, BRM, Lotus and Connaught are the big hitters – can anybody beat Gary Pearson in his P25? – but Cooper-Bristols should impress and Joe Ricciardo (Red Bull F1 ace Daniel's dad) debuts his HWM.

SALVADORI CUP

Sports Racing cars 1956-59

Aston Martin's Le Mans winner Roy Salvadori adored Goodwood and David Brown's marque had a proud record in its enduros. Lister-Jaguars, D-types and fleet Cooper-Jags should rule the roost in this sprint race. Jochen Mass (Mercedes-Benz 300SLs) and Marino Franchitti (Maserati Birdcage) are among its stars.

TIMETABLE

Saturday, March 21

| | |
|------|---|
| 0730 | Gates open |
| 0900 | Official Practice |
| 1110 | High Airbox F1 car Demonstration (part 1) |
| 1125 | High Airbox F1 car Demonstration (part 2) |
| 1145 | Official Practice |
| 1240 | IWC Track Moment |
| 1350 | McLaren F1 GTR Demonstration |
| 1415 | Spectator Grid Walk |
| 1430 | GERRY MARSHALL TROPHY (15 mins) |
| 1620 | TAYLOR TROPHY (20 mins) |
| 1725 | HILL TROPHY (60 mins) |

Sunday, March 22

| | |
|------|---|
| 0730 | Gates open |
| 0930 | Spectator Grid Walk |
| 1000 | LES LESTON CUP (20 mins) |
| 1040 | SOPWITH CUP (20 mins) |
| 1120 | Group C car Demonstration |
| 1145 | DEREK BELL CUP (20 mins) |
| 1225 | JOHN ALDINGTON TROPHY (20 mins) |
| 1300 | Spectator Grid Walk |
| 1325 | High Airbox F1 car Demonstration (part 1) |
| 1340 | High Airbox F1 car Demonstration (part 2) |
| 1410 | EARL HOWE TROPHY (20 mins) |
| 1450 | GERRY MARSHALL TROPHY (45 mins) |
| 1550 | McLaren F1 GTR Demonstration |
| 1615 | BRUCE McLAREN TROPHY (20 mins) |
| 1655 | HAWTHORN TROPHY (20 mins) |
| 1735 | SALVADORI CUP (20 mins) |
| 1830 | Prizegiving in Great Hall |

AVL tries the sim, which uses bits of real C-Class and data gathered from the racetrack



Mercedes' new ball game

With testing limited in the DTM, drivers and teams now rely on simulation to steal a march on rivals. **ANDREW VAN LEEUWEN** tries Mercedes' super-real sim for size

How much did you eat for breakfast?" is the first question that Mercedes' DTM PR man asks me as I walk into the foyer at HWA's headquarters.

I explain to him that my plans to grab an autobahn breakfast somewhere between Mainz and Affalterbach have been scuppered by bad traffic, so I'm running on an empty stomach. "That's probably the best," he says.

I'm in Affalterbach, not far from Stuttgart, to have a steer of Merc's state-of-the-art DTM simulator, which has been online at HWA since 2013. Sure, I was expecting something a bit more than serious than a gaming console, but PR man Oli's stories of drivers having to carry buckets on board during long runs to deal with the motion sickness take me by surprise. What have I got myself into here?

Sports clothes on, a loaned pair of boots and gloves on, and suddenly I'm clambering into something that looks like it belongs at NASA. It's actually the genuine monocoque from a C-Class DTM car, fitted with the entire interior from a Three-Pointed Star racer (the pedals, seat, steering column, steering wheel and dash are all the real thing), mounted on several metres' worth of moving struts.

As I clumsily try to get comfortable inside the car, I'm given some last-minute advice from my driver coach Maximilian Gotz. "As soon as you start to feel sick, let us know over the radio so we can shut it off. We need to use it for the rest of the day, so..." I get the message, Max. Will do.

In the end, I manage 12 laps without a hint of nausea – to my relief, and the surprise of all watching. I also get within about 10 seconds of a decent lap of Hockenheim, although that there's no threat of damaging the car or myself plays its part in the confidence (or is that cockiness) stakes. It's hot, sweaty work, but it's an incredible amount of fun. And it is so much like driving a

real racing car that it's almost unbelievable.

For a driver like Gotz, about to embark upon his first season in such a competitive series as the DTM, this kind of simulator work plays a big role in his preparation. With real testing now limited, a realistic simulator programme is his best chance of getting up to speed before round one. Even before he tested a DTM car for the first time the GT ace spent a couple of days in this very sim, and says it made a big difference.

"I felt really comfortable right from the beginning in the real car," he says.

"I knew what to expect, I knew how much brake pressure I needed, how much steering angle, so it was a big help to get on the pace. To learn the track, to get an impression of how the car feels, it's a big help. In my first year it's really important to get good preparation before going to the track, so I will use this as much as possible."

What's incredible about this simulator is that it isn't just representative of a DTM-style racing car, but that it replicates the actual current-spec C-Class. Think about that; it has the same

Correlation between track and sim is vital for set-up



It's close in the DTM so homework counts



Vitaly Petrov's F1 experience didn't really help him

Gotz needs to be fit for rough-and-tumble of DTM racing



Gary Paffett simulates an error in Hungary last year



Gotz is switching from GT3 to DTM with Merc

"In my first year it's really important to get good preparation, so I will use the sim as much as possible"

DTM rookie Maximilian Gotz

strengths and weaknesses, and the exact same driving characteristics as the real racing car. How do these engineers develop a computer programme that is so realistic?

"It's based on the data that we have from the real cars," explains Stefan Schick, senior engineer of vehicle dynamics at HWA. "You have to test everything that you need for the software, from the tyres to the aerodynamics."

And that makes real, on-track testing a two-way street. The simulator work helps prepare for a test, and the test helps improve the simulator software.

"Exactly," adds Schick. "You always need to do correlations between the car and the simulator,

otherwise you won't get anything meaningful out of the simulator. It has to be done back-to-back."

That accuracy means that valuable set-up work can be done in the simulator. While the complex systems in Formula 1 allow for parts development, the long-life homologation process in the DTM means that sim work is focused on vehicle dynamics rather than new parts.

"The DTM is not like Formula 1 where you need to develop new parts for every race," says Schick. "Our cars are fixed for two or three years, so we only need to focus on set-up changes."

"But," he adds, "we are also working on concept stuff for 2017."

When doing that set-up work, the drivers can feel the difference from tiny changes made to the virtual car, providing the stints in the sim are consistent and precise.

"If you're driving on the edge, on the limit, then you feel the difference when you make a set-up change," says Gotz. "If you struggle, make mistakes, drive over the kerbs and you're all over the place, it's not easy to feel the differences.

"It's not like the steering angle is 15 per cent more, it's like one per cent more, so it's really small changes. If you overdrive the car, then you won't feel it."

"We have to be really consistent, maybe two or three tenths slower, but very consistent. And then you feel the differences."

According to Gotz, that need to be consistent, if not blindingly quick, stops the long stints in the sim from becoming boring. "It depends on which programme we are running, and how many set-up changes we are doing, but I would say we average 50 to 60 laps in a day, with data analysis in between, and making some adjustments," he says.

"But it's not boring. You watch your lap times, and if there is four tenths or five tenths gap then you can't be happy."

"The next lap you have to get it right. You can only be happy if you're within one or two tenths across a whole stint, and with a qualifying sim you should be able to do an out-lap and then your qualifying lap. Then you're in good shape." ❦

Frits van Amersfoort's team is on a roll in F3 and F4

XPB IMAGES



The F3 form of Max Verstappen last year put Van Amersfoort Racing in the limelight. Now the team has the faith of the Schumacher, Newey and Todt families. By **MARCUS SIMMONS**

The best little team in Europe?



Jos Verstappen (right) consults son Max and engineer Rik Vernooij...



...while 22 years earlier it's Jos in the cockpit, here with van Amersfoort

Getting Frits van Amersfoort on the phone for this story has been tough. Not because he's a difficult guy to get hold of – he's a supremely courteous man whose Dutch team comprises one of the nicest bunches of blokes in motorsport – but because logistics haven't been kind to Van Amersfoort Racing in the build-up to the Formula 3 European Championship.

When we first try, VAR is finishing off its first test of the year at Imola. At the second attempt, van Amersfoort is stranded en route from the scenic Italian circuit to the venue for this week's official pre-season test, at Valencia, thanks to a blowout on the VAR truck that has caused frustrating collateral damage. "People tell me how glamorous racing is," he sighs, "but when you're stranded on the autostrada and crawling around your truck trying to repair your airlines and all that kind of shit, where's the glamour? But for me it's also fun: this is part of it, the adventure."

Hang on a minute. So the guy whose team is this year running a driver managed by the son of Jean Todt in F3 (Formula Renault ALPS runner-up Charles Leclerc is part of Nicolas Todt's stable), and who in ADAC Formula 4 is fielding Mick Schumacher (Michael's boy) and Harrison Newey (progeny of Adrian), is telling us he's also the team's truckie? "Well, I have a friend with me today, and I wouldn't have survived without him because something happened to my back," laughs van Amersfoort. "But it's all quite logical: I would say that 75 per cent of the tracks we visit are reached within seven or eight hours in the truck [from VAR's base in Huizen, half an hour east of Amsterdam]. And it's quite relaxing because I don't like to be in the minivan with these boys driving at 150, 160km/h. No, put me in the truck where I can hear my own music, and it's OK!"

It's a great illustration of VAR's no-frills, down-to-earth approach. This little team, under the stewardship of van Amersfoort and right-hand man Rob Niessink, employs just eight people, with 12 more 'weekend warriors'. Its fortunes have waxed and waned over the years, but few of those in the know have ever doubted the engineering excellence at the team's core, brilliantly capitalised upon by Max Verstappen in his sensational breakout F3 season last year. As a result, van Amersfoort and Niessink have enjoyed a huge growth in demand this winter. As well as the three drivers with famous connections, VAR will also run Italian karting sensation Alessio Lorandi (as recommended by Verstappen) and rapid Indian Arjun Maini in F3, while ace Australian karter Joey Mawson – who shone in his rookie car season last year in French F4 – will be a strong team-mate for Schumacher and Newey in the lower league. "That



Stanaway is the most recent VAR champion, in 2011 German F3



Mick Schumacher will race for van Amersfoort in F4

was a bit the outcome of the 2014 season," van Amersfoort says, "because we could try to find the best drivers possible."

A far cry from 18 months ago, when VAR seemingly couldn't get through a Euro F3 weekend without disaster, and when its second team was running in German F3, a series that was already beginning its descent to oblivion. "We'd lost Mans Grenhagen because he'd run out of money, and he had some awful crashes — a big mess," recalls van Amersfoort. "But Sven Muller replaced him and I think he rescued the team, because at the end of 2013 he put it on the podium at Hockenheim and that helped us a lot."

Simultaneously, Verstappen and his father Jos were plotting Max's first step into car racing. Ex-Formula 1 driver Huub Rothengatter, a mentor to the Verstappens since day one, recognised the youthful engineering talent at the team, with Rik Vernooij (who ran Verstappen Jr last year) and Peter van Leeuwen joined last year by Swiss Kevin Lilla. "Even after the difficulties of 2013, Huub knew that we still knew how to do it, and that we had a brilliant engineer called Rik, and that kept it going," continues van Amersfoort.

Rothengatter, jokes van Amersfoort, is "the bastard who took me into racing!" back in 1975. Frits's interest was piqued in the 1960s, when his big brother used to buy AUTOSPORT and leave it on the family piano's sheet-music stand every week. Van Amersfoort already liked getting his hands dirty in his grandparents' car-repair business, and was thrilled when, at the age of 13, he saw his first live race at Zandvoort: the 1967 Dutch Grand Prix won by Jim Clark's Lotus on the Cosworth DFV's debut. "But in those days racing was quite a closed environment," he says. "I was dreaming from the outside. But in 1975 there was some guy in the same town called Huub Rothengatter, who had bought a Royale RP21 Formula Ford and wanted it resprayed. We had a spraying cabin at the garage, and that was the first time I laid hands on a real racing car..."

"Throughout all the years Huub has been the guy who sometimes rescued the team, sometimes helped with contacts. He's a very important character for the team."

In the past four decades, VAR's alumni list looks like a rollcall of Benelux talent: the Verstappens, Vincent Radermecker, the Coronel twins, Bas Leinders, Christijan Albers, Jaap van



Early days with a March 763 F3 and Delta T80 FF2000



Marcel Albers: a fondly remembered champion

Lagen, Giedo van der Garde, Renger van der Zande, Carlo van Dam, Laurens Vanthoor. Also, the team fielded the late Marcel Albers when he won the 1989 Benelux Formula Ford crown. "He was one of the few drivers I could count as a friend," says van Amersfoort, "and we shouldn't forget he brought Rob [Niessink] to the team. With me it comes from my bones and blood and everything inside me, but Rob is a bit more realistic. He keeps an eye on finance, and sometimes he's a bit more diplomatic than I am! You could say we both run the team."

Crucially, VAR also ran Richie Stanaway to a runaway German F3 title in 2011, just as Gerhard Berger was not only about to take over the presidency of the FIA Single Seater Commission, but was looking for a team to run his nephew Lucas Auer in that series in '12. "I can tell you that another big name in racing who helped me a lot is Gerhard," says van Amersfoort. "Sepp Sevignani, who was the engineer of Tom Dillmann [when he won the 2010 German F3 title] is also from Tyrol, and knows Gerhard. At that moment we were the top team in German F3, and Sepp came to me and I did the deal."

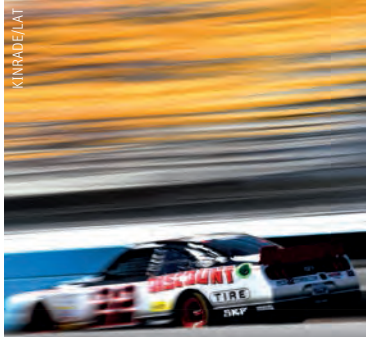
Van Amersfoort, running Volkswagen power in F3, lost Auer to a Mercedes contract and Prema Powerteam for his step to full-time Euro F3: "But it's good to know that didn't influence Gerhard's opinion about us. I spoke to Gerhard several times, and it seems that we had some click together, and he knows a lot of people on higher levels. It's a very big help for the team when Mr Schumacher or even Nicolas Todt call Gerhard, and he says you're the best team you can have."

That aligning of the stars, with the faith of Rothengatter, Sevignani and Berger playing its part in the capture of Verstappen Jr, Schumacher, Newey and Leclerc — as well as the talents of Lorandi, Maini and Mawson — has put the team deservedly on the crest of a wave. "You know, it's something I sometimes find hard to realise is true, that these big names have the confidence in me and my team," says van Amersfoort. "It's a big honour. No, I should say it's overwhelming."

What's sure is that the young men prepping the VAR machinery will give them great equipment, and that the friendly seniors in charge (van Amersfoort and Niessink seem to share the same frizzy grey mop of hair) will steer a happy ship. And the truckie's pretty decent too. ☘

"I FIND IT HARD TO REALISE IT'S TRUE, THAT THESE BIG NAMES HAVE THE CONFIDENCE IN ME AND MY TEAM"

FRITS VAN AMERSFOORT



NASCAR XFINITY

Joey Logano took his first series win in 18 months after leading 176 of the 200 laps at Phoenix, but he only just held off Matt Kenseth, who clung on to the back of Logano's Team Penske Ford (above) for most of the race. Kevin Harvick got into the groove for his Sprint Cup win by finishing third from Austin Dillon and Kyle Busch's understudy Erik Jones. Of those eligible for points, Ty Dillon beat reigning champion Chase Elliott to sixth, allowing Dillon to extend his series lead.

ARCA SERIES

Grant Enfinger continued his run of rich form with victory at Mobile in Alabama at the wheel of his Chevrolet. Enfinger had fallen to fifth, but with new tyres he retook the lead with 60 laps remaining to take his third straight win at Mobile. Brandon Jones claimed second place with Josh Williams getting to the flag in third.

AUSSIE CARRERA CUP

Steven Richards has run his score up to five wins and a second in six races after the Australian Grand Prix support round. Richards won two races at Albert Park, after Nick McBride won on Friday. But a wheel-banging clash with Shae Davies put the young British Formula 3 graduate out of one of the races. Former champion Craig Baird was the best of the rest ahead of Cameron McConville, who split his Porsche duties with driving a Minardi two-seater over the weekend!

KUWAIT RALLY

Nasser Saleh Al-Attiyah coasted to a record-breaking fifth victory on the latest round of the Middle East Rally Championship. Partnered to a fourth successive win this year by French co-driver Matthieu Baume, the Ford Fiesta RRC driver (below) won nine of the 13 stages to win by 1m02.1s. Abu Dhabi Racing's Khalid Al-Qassimi won two stages and finished second in his Citroen. Two punctures and a one-minute time penalty cost Saudi Yazeed Al-Rajhi a lot of time and he finished third.



V8 SUPERCARS MELBOURNE (AUS), MARCH 13-15

Winterbottom on top as Prodrive emulates Merc F1

FORD FALCONS, ROLLING STARTS AND tyres were the talking points of the V8 Supercar support events at the Australian Grand Prix.

After qualifying first and second, Mark Winterbottom and Chaz Mostert took one-two results in all four races at Albert Park, giving Prodrive its first clean sweep around the Grand Prix track. The Ford drivers looked to be in a class of their own, and even the need to come back from a bad start in one of the races didn't prevent Mostert backing up his team-mate.

But the 2015 regulations, which have seen a dramatic decrease in the number of tyres available to the teams, meant that conservative driving was the order of the day, leading to processional racing with few overtaking manoeuvres. Shane van Gisbergen was the best of the Holden drivers, the Tekno driver taking three third places, while factory HRT man James Courtney was the only other driver to get onto the podium, doing so in race one.

The final race featured a messy start and a lot of damage. With the non-points races featuring the only rolling starts on the V8 calendar, the first three races were relatively clean. But in the final race on Sunday, the front cars appeared to fan out early at the lights, leaving those behind with difficulties in a concertina effect. David Reynolds and Andre Heimgartner both jumped early and were penalised, but a worse fate awaited six drivers behind. The cars



of Craig Lowndes, Jason Bright, Marcos Ambrose, Will Davison and Nick Percat were out of the race, while James Moffat's Nissan had to pit for repairs before carrying on.

A number of teams now face a tight schedule to repair their cars before they are sea-freighted to Tasmania for the next championship round at Symmons Plains.

It was a low-key weekend for Red Bull Racing Australia. Neither Jamie Whincup nor Craig Lowndes appeared to have winning pace over the weekend, nor did the Triple Eight-run team appear to make any progress towards the front of the field in the four races.

It was a terrible weekend for Volvo hero Scott McLaughlin, sent to the rear of the grid after making contact with Dale Wood in one race, only to suffer what appeared to be an engine

failure. Team-mate David Wall didn't even get that far, pulling out of the event with a burnt foot, which meant that Chris Pither took over his car for the rest of the weekend.

● Phil Branagan

RESULTS

Race 1 1 Mark Winterbottom (Ford Falcon), 12 laps in 27m39.1489s; 2 Chaz Mostert (Ford), +1.7385s; 3 James Courtney (Holden Commodore); 4 Shane van Gisbergen (Holden); 5 Fabian Coulthard (Holden); 6 Jamie Whincup (Holden). **Race 2** 1 Winterbottom, 9 laps in 21m53.9937s; 2 Mostert, +0.4731s; 3 van Gisbergen; 4 Courtney; 5 Whincup; 6 Rick Kelly (Nissan Altima). **Race 3** 1 Winterbottom, 12 laps in 24m09.2002s; 2 Mostert, +1.0430s; 3 van Gisbergen; 4 Courtney; 5 Tim Slade (Holden); 6 Whincup. **Race 4** 1 Winterbottom, 11 laps in 26m30.2734s; 2 Mostert, +1.0588s; 3 van Gisbergen; 4 Courtney; 5 Whincup; 6 Garth Tander (Holden).

24 HOUR SERIES MUGELLO 12 HOURS (I), MARCH 13-14 RD 2/6

Ram can't butt Porsche out of win

HERBERTH MOTORSPORT'S PORSCHE triumphed in the Mugello 12 Hours, but it could have been much closer if not for bad luck for British team Ram Racing and its Mercedes under the race's Code 60 neutralisations.

The Merc, driven by Tom Onslow-Cole, Adam Christodoulou and Paul White, was on top after the opening four-hour segment on Friday, but lost the lead three hours into Saturday's eight-hour blast when it was caught in the pits as the race went under caution.

At the end of the race Christodoulou was together on track with Robert Renauer, who shared the winning Porsche with twin brother Alfred, Daniel Allemann and Ralf Bohn, but they were a lap apart.

The Rinaldi-run Ferrari team, led by Pierre Kaffer, looked to be a force, with the German leading Robert Renauer early in the race. But they lost several laps early on Saturday



Herberth Porsche on top in Italy

with a problem at the right front. This promoted the Hofer Racing Mercedes to third, while a comeback from the Ferrari ended with Kaffer pipping Duncan Huisman in the GDL Racing Mercedes to fourth.

The SP3 class, predominantly for GT4 cars, featured a strong British presence, with Bradley Ellis, Flick Haigh and Adrian Barwick taking the honours in their Optimum Motorsport Ginetta after the Cor

Euser Racing Lotus became stranded on course. Third was the Speedworks Aston Martin of Ollie Hancock, Devon Modell and John Gilbert.

Phil Quaife (second in class in a SEAT Leon Supercopa) and James Kaye (third in his division in a MARC Focus V8) were other Brits on the podium, along with Matt Neal, Lucas Orrock and Tom Wilson, who were second in class in their humble KPM Racing VW Golf.

RESULTS

1 Robert Renauer/Alfred Renauer/Daniel Allemann/Ralf Bohn (Porsche 911 GT3-R), 342 laps; 2 Adam Christodoulou/Tom Onslow-Cole/Paul White (Mercedes SLS AMG GT3), +1m51.910s; 3 Christiaan Frankenhout/Kenneth Heyer/Michael Kroll/Chantal Kroll/Roland Eggimann (Mercedes); 4 Pierre Kaffer/Alexander Volz/Steve Parrow (Ferrari 458 Italia GT3); 5 Duncan Huisman/Luc Braams/Max Braams (Mercedes); 6 Paul Lafargue/Patrice Lafargue/Gabriel Abergel (Porsche 911 Cup).

NASCAR SPRINT CUP PHOENIX (USA), MARCH 15 RD 4/36

Unbeatable Harvick continues extraordinary run

WITH ONLY FOUR RACES GONE IN the NASCAR Sprint Cup season, reigning champion Kevin Harvick is doing his best to put the opposition into a chokehold early.

The Stewart-Haas driver had won four of the past five races at Phoenix and was on a roll from the previous week's Las Vegas triumph. So when the #4 Chevrolet topped the qualifying sheets on Friday afternoon, it looked like the 39-year-old could be making it five out of six (and four in a row) at the Arizona mile.

Harvick stole the lead from Joey Logano after a brief spell in

second, and the first real challenge came from team-mate Kurt Busch on his return from a three-week NASCAR suspension.

It took the 2004 champion most of the race to get up to Harvick, but he looked capable of challenging the sister car for the win until a perfect Harvick restart from a caution with 76 laps to go quickly created a two-second gap.

Harvick then survived two late caution periods, both brought about by team owner/team-mate Tony Stewart, with Jamie McMurray his only real opposition to the end.

Ryan Newman and Kasey Kahne

finished in third and fourth respectively, with Busch rounding out the top five after pitting for four tyres during a late-race caution. Logano fell back to eighth.

Not since Jimmie Johnson at Charlotte in 2004-05 has a driver won four straight at a single track. Perhaps more worrying for the opposition, Harvick is the first man to score seven straight top-two finishes in the Cup series since Richard Petty in 1975. "That gives me chills," said Harvick when that stat was put to him after the race. The opposition would probably say the same.

RESULTS

1 Kevin Harvick (Chevrolet SS), 312 laps in 2h57m01s; 2 Jamie McMurray (Chevy), +1.153s; 3 Ryan Newman (Chevy); 4 Kasey Kahne (Chevy); 5 Kurt Busch (Chevy); 6 Brad Keselowski (Ford Fusion); 7 Martin Truex Jr (Chevy); 8 Joey Logano (Ford); 9 Jeff Gordon (Chevy); 10 Kyle Larson (Chevy). **Chase grid**
1 Harvick, 2 wins/182 points; 2 Logano, 1/160; 3 Jimmie Johnson, 1/124; 4 Truex, 0/155; 5 Kahne, 0/132; 6 AJ Allmendinger, 0/127; 7 Dale Earnhardt Jr, 0/126; 8 Newman, 0/123; 9 Keselowski, 0/116; 10 Matt Kenseth, 0/113; 11 Paul Menard, 0/112; 12 Casey Mears, 0/111; 13 Denny Hamlin, 0/108; 14 Aric Almirola, 0/105; 15 Clint Bowyer, 0/101; 16 Greg Biffle, 0/101.



Harvick and McMurray (1) lead the pack at Phoenix

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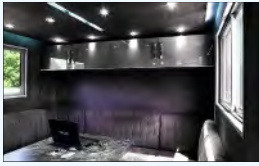
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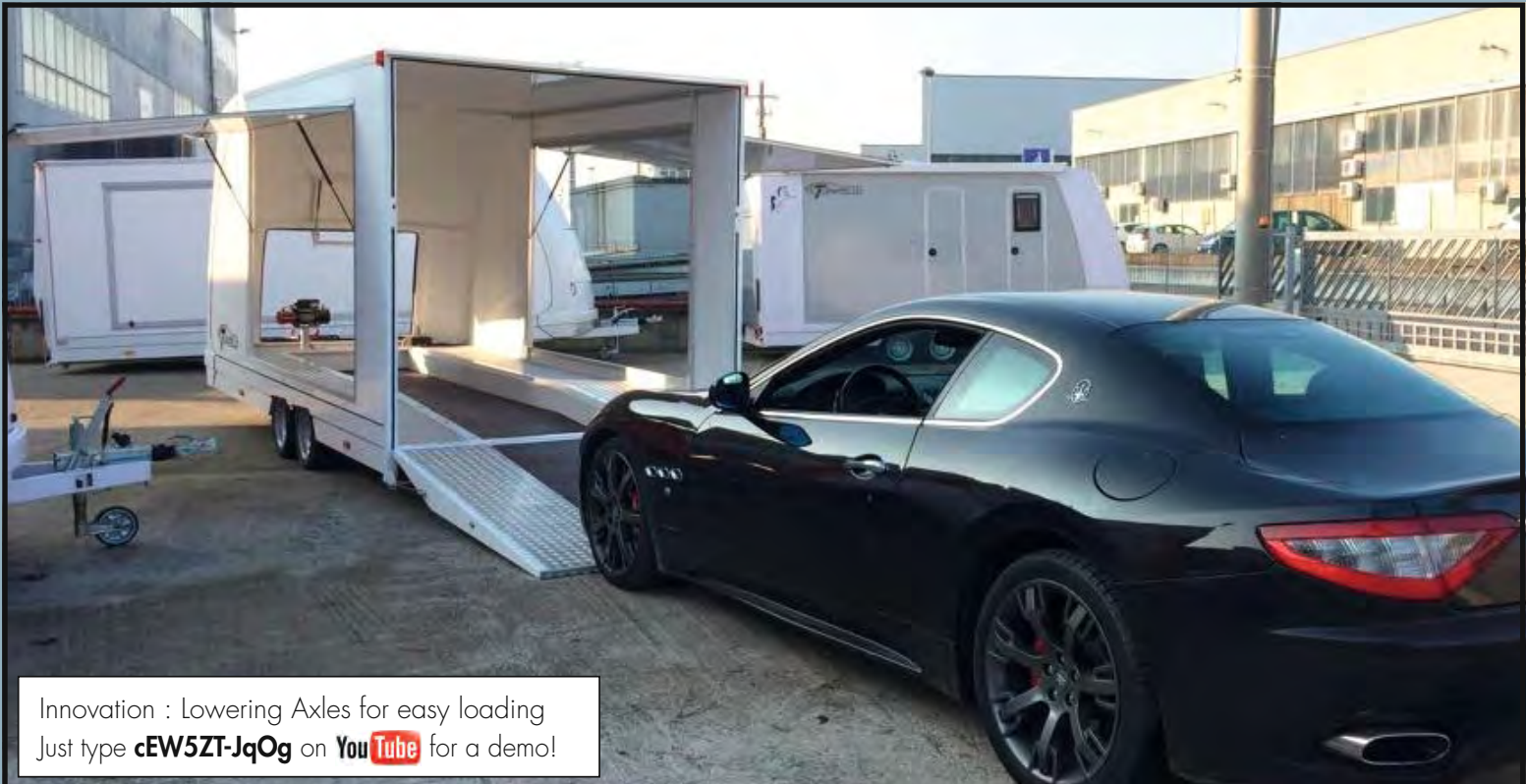
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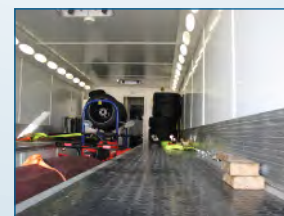
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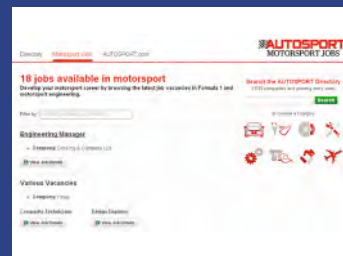
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High-quality newcomers have boosted prospects for TOCA support series



EBREY/LAT

Caine, Smith bolster GT4 grid

Ex-British GT ace and Radical champion join Ginetta's flagship series

THE GINETTA GT4 SUPERCUP has been strengthened for 2015 by the arrival of 2012 British GT champion Michael Caine.

Caine, who took the GT crown alongside Daniele Perfetti and was runner-up last season, has been forced out of British GT by the championship's decision to formally ban gold/silver pairings.

That means the ex-Porsche Carrera Cup GB driver could not continue his partnership with Ahmad Al Harthy, and Caine will instead race in the British Touring Car Championship support series for the JHR Developments team.

The 44-year-old will race with the backing of national rally champion Steve Perez.

"I can't wait to get out in the car," said Caine. "I'm running with the best team, so all I have to do is work

out how to get the most out of the car and I should do OK."

SMITH SWAPS LMP3 FOR G55

Reigning Radical European Masters champion Bradley Smith will contest the GT4 SuperCup after plans to race in the European Le Mans Series this year fell through.

Having agreed terms to race for Greaves Motorsport in the new-for-2015 LMP3 division of the ELMS, the team's decision to focus solely on its LMP2 programme forced the 24-year-old to remain with his family's Mectech Motorsport squad.

"We were in a similar situation last season with the SR8 in the Radical European Masters," explained Smith, who tested a McLaren GT3 in 2013. "It was a very tough start to the year, and I

expect the same this season.

"But if we can have a decent opener at Brands, we can then get testing and apply the same structure as last season. That gives me confidence that we can go on to win the title."

Mectech boss Mike Smith confirmed his team would still have a presence in Radicals this year, adding: "It's going to be a steep learning curve, but the team has risen up to similar challenges in other categories and gone on to win races and titles."

HALE RETURNS WITH SVR

Ex-Ginetta Junior ace Mitchell Hale will return to racing this year in the GT4 SuperCup with the frontrunning SV Racing squad.

The move marks his return to racing for the first time since narrowly missing out on the 2010 Formula Renault BARC title to Alice Powell.

Subsequent funding issues prevented Hale, now 21, from building on his maiden single-seater season, but he is convinced his lack of recent experience won't prove an insurmountable obstacle.

"The tests I had at Donington recently were very positive," said Hale. "I really clicked with the G55 so I'm confident I won't be too far off the pace."

SCOTT MITCHELL
FEATURES
EDITOR

scott.mitchell@
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@ScottMitchell189



THERE HAVE BEEN A FEW

questions raised over the Ginetta GT4 SuperCup in recent weeks, as the Yorkshire marque's flagship series toiled in driver announcements while Porsche's Carrera Cup GB revival continued and others made slow-but-steady progress in filling seats.

This week's trio of announcements goes some way to easing any concerns over the SuperCup, if only for the fact that quality trumps quantity. There remains uncertainty over what the eventual tally will be, though anything above the mid-teens looks unlikely.

But the addition of 2012 British GT champion Michael Caine, Radical supreme Bradley Smith and one-time Formula Renault BARC hotshot Mitchell Hale is good for the series. It wasn't exactly overflowing with drivers last season but it's the calibre at the sharp end that matters most. And with Charlie Robertson, Andrew Watson, David Pittard and Carl Breeze regularly duking it out for wins, there were no worries on that front.

That said, it looks like lagging behind its TOCA support rivals. News that James Hunt's son Freddie will contest the Renault UK Clio Cup this year is a boost for a series that has struggled to recapture its old momentum since switching to the new car. Team Pyro's renewed commitment in returning with Ash Hand is also good news, having looked as though it might lose Mark Hunt's squad altogether at one stage.

But the star turn continues to be the Carrera Cup. More than 20 drivers turned up for its media day on Tuesday and more, it seems, are yet to be announced. For many, Brands Hatch cannot come soon enough.

Smith and Mectech are bidding for fourth straight title



READ



Hale: back racing again



EBREY/LAT

Di Mauro won at Brands last year and was a title favourite for the coming campaign

BRDC F4

Petroball team withdraws from BRDC F4

THE BRDC FORMULA 4 RACE- winning Petroball team has been forced to withdraw from this year's campaign. The Brazilian squad ran Gaetano di Mauro, a protege of ex-Formula 1 star Rubens Barrichello, and American racer Dan Roeper in the series last season. Di Mauro secured the team's first win at Brands Hatch en route to eighth in the points and went on to finish as

runner-up in the Winter Series. He was due to race alongside compatriot Enzo Bortoleto for his sophomore F4 season and was tipped to be a title challenger before Petroball's entry was curtailed by problems affecting Brazilian state oil giant Petrobras. Team boss Jose Sabathe explained: "Petroball has some business with and

is a trading partner of Petrobras. "But Petrobras is currently involved in an investigation, which is a big problem for the team." Sabathe said he hoped that the Milton Keynes-based team would be able to return to the grid in time for the Winter Series, when a new Tatuus chassis will be introduced. "We have already signed a contract

with [F4 promoter] MSVR for two of the Tatuus carbon tub cars and we have made advance payments for those," he said. "We hope di Mauro will return in one of those, but in the meantime I'm trying to find another category in which to place him." MSVR chief Jonathan Palmer said efforts will be made to find both drivers alternative seats on the grid.

MSA Formula

Double R grabs Brazilian F3 driver for British campaign

BRAZILIAN FORMULA 3 DRIVER Matheus Tobias Leist will race in the MSA Formula series this year after joining Double R Racing.

Leist, who is managed by 2004-05 British F3 race winner Danilo Dirani, joins Indian Tarun Reddy to the team's assault on the new-for-2015 championship.

Leist made his car-racing bow last season in Class B of the Brazilian F3 series, in which he placed second with two class wins. Double R team principal Anthony 'Boyo' Hieatt believes that experience will serve the 17-year-old well.

"Matheus is a driver with a lot of potential and a good group of people around him," said Hieatt. "We're expecting MSA Formula to be

competitive, but his F3 experience will stand him in good stead."

Leist added: "I am very pleased to race my first season in the UK with Double R and Boyo, as he was Danilo's engineer in his first year in F3 [with Carlin Motorsport] back in 2004."



Leist tested at Silverstone

EBREY

BRDC Formula 4

Indian and Argentinian add more internationals

INDIA'S AKHIL RABINDRA WILL make his UK racing debut this season after joining Douglas Motorsport's BRDC Formula 4 squad.

Rabindra finished second in last year's JK Racing Asia series for Formula BMW cars, and dovetailed this with selected Formula Masters China rounds. He was also part of the FIA-backed Young Driver Excellence Academy.

He is the first 2015 signing for the frontrunning squad, which carried



Rabindra has joined Douglas Motorsport

Diego Menchaca to a race win last year. Team boss Wayne Douglas said: "Akhil has plenty of racing experience, so we hope to be challenging for podiums from the very first race of the season."

Argentinian racer Hernan Fallas joins Mark Godwin Racing for his first foray outside South America.

The 20-year-old has spent the past two seasons competing in Formula Metropolitana in his home country, winning two races last year.

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Renault UK Clio Cup

Hunt's son confirms Clio Cup move as Hand returns

FREDDIE HUNT, THE SON OF 1976

Formula 1 world champion James Hunt, will race in the British Touring Car Championship-supporting Renault UK Clio Cup this season.

The 27-year-old returned to racing last year, contesting selected Formula Ford 1600 events before taking part in the 2015 MRF Challenge.

Hunt tested for the Bubble & Kick



Hunt joins new Clio team BKR

Racing team, which is new to the Clio Cup, at Brands Hatch earlier this month (see AUTOSPORT, March 5) and has agreed a deal to contest the full season.

"Our test together at Brands Hatch went really well and we've kept talking since," said Hunt. "I was very impressed by the Clio and out of all the options I had this made perfect sense."

Hunt added this was a serious move to reignite his motorsport career, as he has aspirations of competing in either touring car or endurance racing.

Meanwhile, Ash Hand will remain in the Clio Cup for a third successive season after agreeing a return to Team Pyro. After finishing eighth in last year's standings with SV Racing, the 20-year-old joins Brett Smith and Ashley Sutton at the team with which he made his debut in the series in 2013.

Clio Cup Series

Allison to club Clio Series

SOMETIME BRITISH TOURING CAR

Championship racer Matt Allison is to make a full-time comeback in this year's Clio Cup Race Series.

Allison, who took class honours in the GTC class of British GT in 2006 before racing in the BTCC in '07 and '08, has bought a third-generation Clio from the crack Team Pyro squad to run himself under the Intercity Racing banner.

The 31-year-old is no stranger to Clio action, having raced in the

BTCC-supporting Clio Cup UK series, most recently in 2011.

"The Clio Cup Series is perfect for my situation now," said Allison. "It's a cost-effective way to go racing, and with a level playing field too."

Joining the sister Clio Cup Road Series is Matt Fincham, whose Go Racing Motorsport team will contest the championship alongside its existing 750MC programme. It hopes to run a second car later this year.



Allison raced Chevy in BTCC

British GT4

Birch joins Century for GT4

JAMES BIRCH WILL RETURN TO

Century Motorsport this season to drive a Ginetta G55 in British GT.

The Nathan Freke-run team will field a single G55 in the GT4 class for Birch and Norwegian Aleksander Schjerpen, who finished fifth with Century in GT4 last year.

"It's a brilliant opportunity for me to get back out with a top team," said Birch, who last raced a G55 in 2013, when he contested three races for Century's Ginetta GT Supercup operation before switching to the Porsche Carrera Cup GB. "I don't see why we shouldn't aim to lead the field in GT4 and fight for wins

from the outset as we have been working hard to bring everything together."

Freke added: "It's very much our intention to regain the teams' title this year and have a good shot at the drivers' crown too with such a strong pairing."



Birch raced G55 for Century in '13

HUMBLE PYE

The voice of club racing

Robb Gravett in this Beetle is one of many MM entries



HAWKINS

"ONCE THEY RUMBLE PAST I'LL BE IN HEAVEN"

Race-hungry fans will flock to Goodwood this weekend for the 73rd Members' Meeting, the second of the circuit's modern era. Last year's, staged in summer-like heat, against a backdrop of daffodils, rewarded all who got off the fence. No surprise, because Lord March's team does things right, as his grandfather did in 1949-66.

The 72nd MM was vastly more spectacular than its predecessors. Period events were basic by design, put on for BARC members who had lost their beloved Brooklands with the onset of World War 2. It was 10 years before the first 'clubbie' was staged at its new airfield home, worlds away from the grandeur of Hugh Locke-King's Surrey leviathan, the world's first purpose-built paved race track in 1907.

Yet the joy of competitors was unbridled, for at last the green shoots of the nation's recovery were visible. The qualities and style of Goodwood made it somewhere special, a firm favourite as new generations have discovered since Charles March triumphantly returned racing to the motor circuit at 1998's Revival Meeting, on the back of six Festivals of Speed.

The notion of running races for cars built after the track closed in 1966 initially polarised opinion, but competitors, teams and spectators loved the change – a unique selling point to broaden the Goodwood Road Racing Club's portfolio. With

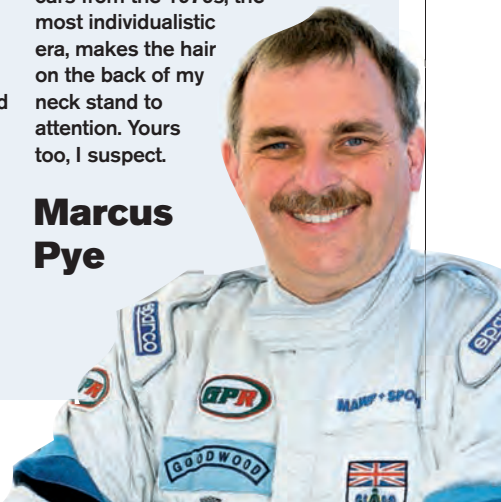
a relaxed ambience, space for mechanics to work and families to picnic over a compact two-day format, the iconic motto of "the right crowd and no crowding" had never been more apt.

I'm back on commentary duty with old AUTOSPORT colleagues Bruce Jones and Henry Hope-Frost, who share my passion for old cars. While the entire programme looks tasty, I'm delighted that traditional sports and saloon races have not been overlooked among the Touring Car, 1000cc F3, GT enduro and Sports-Prototype showpieces.

Stellar entries underline the gravitational pull of the Goodwood brand, not always the case in the 1960s, but once those Chevrolet Camaros and Rover SD1s rumble past in qualifying on Saturday morning I'll be in heaven.

And that's before the visceral howl of the biggest set of Formula 1 cars from the 1970s, the most individualistic era, makes the hair on the back of my neck stand to attention. Yours too, I suspect.

Marcus Pye



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Goodwood circuit hosts Revival and Members' Meeting



EBREY

In brief

Ticktum tops testing

Fortec Motorsport driver Dan Ticktum (above) topped a rain-affected penultimate MSA Formula test at Silverstone on Monday, setting a best lap of 56.819s during the afternoon. Colton Herta was second quickest, almost three tenths shy of Ticktum, ahead of Carlin team-mate Lando Norris, who was the pacesetter in the slower morning session.

Simons still in F3 Cup

James Simons will return to the F3 Cup this season with his Stanbridge Motorsport operation in a Dallara F307, with the team expanding to field an F395 in the Masters class for Lee McCrumlish. Also racing in the older class in selected rounds will be Geoffrey Hoodless, who has acquired a Swedish title-winning March 813.

Lister trophy for jubilee

The Lister Motor Company has launched the Brian Lister Trophy as part of its 60th-anniversary celebrations. It will be awarded to the best-performing Lister in the Stirling Moss Trophy series for pre-'61 Sportscars and Sports Racers. All Lister cars competing in five rounds held at prestigious European historic events will be eligible for the trophy.

Brits top FR2.0 test

Jack Aitken topped the timesheets during the second day of Formula Renault 2.0 Eurocup testing at the Le Mans Bugatti circuit. The Koiranen GP driver was quickest in the wet morning session of the first day before setting the pace the next day. His team-mate and fellow Brit Jake Hughes finished second fastest.

Tillett's career switch

Laura Tillett will move away from single-seaters after joining Team HARD for an assault on this year's Volkswagen Racing Cup. The 23-year-old has raced in Formula Renault BARC and the MRF Challenge.

Goodwood

Housing 'threatens' Goodwood

GOODWOOD CLAIMS ITS FUTURE

would be thrown into doubt if an application for hundreds of homes to be built near the circuit is approved.

Last April, the Commercial Estates Group submitted an application to Chichester District Council to build 350 new homes half a mile from the circuit.

The Goodwood Estate, which was supported in its original objection by

the nearby Rolls-Royce Motor Cars company, has now opposed a revised request that reduced the proposed number of new homes to 300.

A Goodwood statement said: "This reduction does not in any way make the development more acceptable.

"Inappropriate development or policies affecting any part or setting of the Estate will jeopardise its long-term viability

and sustainability, reversing the long-fought battle to return it to solvency and retain it as a complete entity rather than be broken up."

Goodwood's first event of the year takes place this weekend with the 73rd Members' Meeting. The circuit, which is used regularly for testing, also hosts the popular Revival meeting, while the Festival of Speed is held on the estate.



EBREY/LAT

TOCA supports

MSVR test-day cost hike

LEADING FIGURES OF THE TOCA support series have criticised the timing of MotorSport Vision's move to increase testing costs.

MSVR previously charged a set fee, understood to be £3800 per series, for the exclusive use of its circuits on a Friday ahead of a TOCA weekend. This will now be £417 per car for BTCC events at Brands Hatch, Oulton Park and Snetterton.

That means series with bigger grids than last year could end up paying

substantially more, a cost that could be passed down to competitors.

Ginetta championships boss Ash Gallagher said he was "disappointed" by the timing, while Sam Roach, of MSA Formula promoter Racing Line, called it "a big surprise to finances so late ahead of the season".

MSVR chief executive Jonathan Palmer said: "In hindsight, it probably would have been better to publish the costs earlier, but it wasn't a deliberate effort to make it late."

Mini Challenge

Dale in Mini Challenge move

HISTORIC MASTERS WINNER

Dale Racing will enter three cars in this year's Mini Challenge.

The Sussex-based team, a three-time winner of the Mini class of the Masters Pre-'66 Touring Car Championship, will field two new-for-2015 F56 chassis for Luke Reade plus team boss and Mini Miglia regular Phil Dale, alongside a Cooper-class entry for Jo Polley.

Dale, a podium finisher in last year's Daytona Classic 24 Hours, will be among those vying for a share of the Mini Challenge's £18,000 prize fund, which is to be split equally among the respective winners of the Cooper, JCW and Gen 3 classes after the 2015 season.

The award has been handed to a single driver in the past two seasons, when £15,000 was on offer.

GT Cup

Mazda ace Eaton to race BMW in GT Cup

MAZDA MX-5 SUPERCUP

champion Abbie Eaton will race a BMW M3 GTR in this year's GT Cup.

The 22-year-old, who took last year's MX-5 crown by a single point from Tom Roche with five wins to her credit, will campaign the GTB-class machine

prepared by former British Touring Car Championship squad Geoff Steel Racing alongside Michael Symons.

"It's nice to have some horsepower under my right foot," commented Eaton after sampling the car for the first time in testing at Donington Park.

"I've concentrated on acclimatising myself to it as it's my only test before the start of the season. I'm really excited and looking forward to it."

The BRDC Rising Star will be driving the car that Jeff Wyatt used to take class and overall GT Cup honours in 2013.



Eaton has tested GSR BMW

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CHESTER



PATCH FIESTA MONDELLO PARK, MARCH 15 MPMC

Rabbitt evades his hunters

BARRY RABBITT HELD ON FOR VICTORY in the first Patch Fiesta race of the year as the 2015 Mondello Park season began.

Willie Barrett was on pole, but the hugely experienced Rabbitt got the best start and immediately began to close the door. The pair clashed as they passed under the bridge but then separated as Rabbitt drew ahead. As they turned into Turn 1, Rabbitt was pushed from behind and just held on to the subsequent sideways moment to keep the lead, although

there was carnage behind. John Denning, champion in 2013, made the best of this to charge up to second and immediately began to challenge Rabbitt. Despite the advantage of a clear track, former Leinster Trophy winner Rabbitt was unable to make his getaway. Denning came under sustained attack from Stephen Kirwan, whose bonnet was askew from the first-corner fracas, with poleman Barrett right there too in fourth. In their wake Ulick Burke and Shane Roe

battled mightily, with Burke finally getting the upper hand. Rabbitt held on to add to his list of wins at Mondello Park but was typically realistic. "We didn't have the pace today – I was lucky to win that one!" That said, he won't hand away that title lead too easily.

- Leo Nulty
- RESULTS (13 LAPS) 1 Barry Rabbitt 15m37.776s (57.37mph); 2 John Denning +0.435s; 3 Stephen Kirwan; 4 Philip Lawless; 5 Ulick Burke; 6 Shane Roe. Fastest lap Kirwan 1m10.991s (58.29mph). Pole: William Barrett; Starters: 24.**

BRITISH RALLYCROSS CROFT, MARCH 15 ROUND 1/8

Scott wins British RX opener on series return

YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN HARD pressed to tell that, until last weekend's first round of the British Rallycross Championship at Croft, Albatec Racing team owner Andy Scott hadn't so much as sat in his Peugeot 208 Supercar since the final round of the World Rallycross Championship last November.

Fastest in practice, Scott set the quickest time in the first two heats to land pole position for the A final,

joined on the front row by Croft specialist Kevin Procter (fastest in the third heat) and Ollie O'Donovan. Having made the best getaway, Scott led the opening lap from O'Donovan's Focus before easing away from his rival to straightforward victory by a margin of six seconds. "Two fastest heat times, fastest lap and leading the championship – it can't get much better than that," said a jubilant Scott after his triumph. After a slow start dropped him behind Pat Doran, Procter quickly repassed the Citroen driver, but was unable to do anything about O'Donovan's second place.

Doran meanwhile had to fend off a recovering Julian Godfrey to take fourth, the reigning champion only making the grid by winning the B final after a troubled day.

Andy Grant, Steve Mundy and

'Mad Mark' completed finishers, while Steve Hill, Steve Harris and debutant Geoffrey Dolan all dropped out of contention in the B final. Gary Simpson scored an emphatic SuperNational victory, although equally impressive was third-place man Daniel Rooke, competing in only his second rallycross event. Allan Tapscott split the pair in second, while pre-event favorite Stuart Emery retired in the second heat with terminal engine problems.

- Hal Ridge
- RESULTS (ALL 6 LAPS) 1 Andy Scott (Peugeot 208) 4m21.848s; 2 Ollie O'Donovan (Ford Focus) +5.971s; 3 Kevin Procter (Ford Fiesta); 4 Pat Doran (Citroen DS3); 5 Julian Godfrey (Fiesta); 6 Andy Grant (Focus). Pole: Scott; Starters: 11.**
- SUPERNATIONAL 1 Gary Simpson (BMW E30) 5m01.052s; 2 Allan Tapscott (Vauxhall Corsa) +0.960s; 3 Daniel Rooke (Citroen AX); 4 Tony Lynch (Mini); 5 Guy Corner (Lotus Exige); 6 Todd Crooks (Mini). Pole: Rooke; Starters: 12.**



Mondello in brief

John Farrelly (SEAT Supercopa) took the honours in both **Irish Touring Car** races at Mondello Park, but only after a race-stopping shunt with Rod McGovern in the first. Des Foley was dominant in the **Formula Vee B/C** race, crossing the line well ahead of the opposition, while in the A race Ray Moore emulated Foley's performance, with poleman Dan Polley coming out on top of a hectic battle for second. Sophie Byrne blitzed the **Future Classics** race but unfortunately broke the barrier time, handing the win to Robbie Parks's Celica. Sean Doyle did the double in the new **ASK Supercar Championship**, holding Peter Barrable at bay in both. Bernard Foley's V8 MGB took **HRCA** honours, once he disposed of the fast-starting Modsport Midget of Steve Griffin. James Roe and Jordan Dempsey shared **Ginetta Junior** wins, while Jack Byrne took two wins in the new **Fiesta Junior** class.

- RESULTS**
- FORMULA VEE (14 LAPS) 1 Des Foley (Leastone) 15m07.938s (63.81mph); 2 Gavin Buckley (Sheane) +12.681s; 3 Anthony Cross (Sheane); 4 Shane McBride (Sheane); 5 Ger Byrne (Sheane); 6 Michael Quinlan (Sheane). Fastest lap Foley 1m03.074s (65.61mph). Pole: Foley; Starters: 13.**
- RACE 2 (15 LAPS) 1 Ray Moore (Leastone) 15m29.530s (66.78mph); 2 Dan Polley (Sheane) +7.443s; 3 David O'Brien (Sheane); 4 David Kelly (Sheane); 5 Kevin Grogan (Leastone); 6 Colm Blackburn (Leastone). FL Grogan 1m01.385s (67.42mph). P: Polley; S: 18.**

- IRISH TOURING CARS (12 LAPS) 1 John Farrelly (SEAT Leon Supercopa) 13m28.053s (61.46mph); 2 Brian Berry (Leon) +3.599s; 3 Kevin Doran (Honda Civic); 4 Kealan O'Connor (Honda Integra); 5 Eoghan Fogarty (BMW M3); 6 Garreth Hayden (Honda Integra). Class winner Grzegorz Kalinecki (Leon). FL Farrelly 59.948s (69.03mph). P: Rod McGovern (Leon); S: 19.**
- RACE 2 (15 LAPS) 1 Farrelly 15m24.610s (67.14mph); 2 Doran +11.784s; 3 Hayden; 4 Owain Drought (Integra); 5 Robert Savage (Integra); 6 O'Connor. CW Robert Doherty (Civic). FL Farrelly 59.546s (69.50mph). P: Drought; S: 17.**

- MONDELLO PARK GT SERIES/ASK SUPERCARS (15 LAPS) 1 Pat McBennett (Lotus Elise) 14m46.480s (70.02mph); 2 Hugh McEvoy (Elise) +38.915s; 3 Sean Doyle (RT Supercar); 4 Bob Cameron (RT); 5 Peter Barrable (RT); 6 Philip Jones (RT). CW Doyle. FL McBennett 57.826s (71.57mph) P: Doyle; S: 12.**
- RACE 2 (15 LAPS) 1 McBennett 14m53.667s (69.46mph); 2 McEvoy +37.678s; 3 Doyle; 4 Barrable; 5 Cameron; 6 Jones. CW Doyle. FL McBennett 58.047s (71.29mph). P: Doyle; S: 12.**

- GINETTA JUNIOR IRELAND/FIESTA JUNIOR (14 LAPS) 1 James Roe (Ginetta G20) 15m41.870s (61.51mph); 2 William Harron (G20) +0.795s; 3 Jordan Dempsey (G20); 4 Samuel Harron (G20); 5 Darragh Denning (G20); 6 Loris Nikolov (G20). CW Jack Byrne (Fiesta). FL Dempsey 1m05.995s (62.71mph) (class record). P: Dempsey; S: 10.**
- RACE 2 (14 LAPS) 1 Dempsey 15m48.834s (61.06mph); 2 Roe +4.485s; 3 W Harron; 4 S Harron; 5 Denning; 6 Charlie Linnane (G20). CW Byrne. FL Dempsey 1m06.539s (62.19mph). P: Dempsey; S: 10.**

- FUTURE CLASSICS (12 LAPS) 1 Robbie Parks (Toyota Celica) 15m31.087s (53.34mph); 2 Ian Thornton (VW Golf) +0.806s; 3 Timothy Duggan (SEAT Ibiza); 4 Brendan Travers (Fiat Punto); 5 Eddie Kinirons (Talbot Sunbeam); 6 Daniel Byrne (Vauxhall Chevette). FL Sophie Byrne (Ford Fiesta XR2) 1m09.126s (59.87mph). P: Parks; S: 15.**

- HRCA HISTORICS (13 LAPS) 1 Bernard Foley (MGB GTV8) 15m01.410s (59.68mph); 2 Steve Griffin (MG Midget) +1.451s; 3 Jamie Chadwick (Porsche 944); 4 Paul Gray (Porsche 911RS); 5 Liam Ruth (MG Midget); 6 David Moloney (MG Midget). FL Foley 1m02.672s (66.03mph). P: Griffin; S: 8.**



Teddington Studios, Broom Road, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 9BE, UK.
Tel: +44 (0) 20 8267 5804 Fax: +44 (0) 20 8267 5922
E-mail: autosport@haymarket.com Website: www.autosport.com

EDITOR
Edd Straw ext.5889
edd.straw@haymarket.com

DEPUTY EDITOR
Marcus Simmons ext.5807
marcus.simmons@haymarket.com

GROUP F1 EDITOR
Jonathan Noble ext.5810
jonathan.noble@haymarket.com

F1 ASSISTANT EDITOR
Ben Anderson ext.5425
ben.anderson@haymarket.com

F1 REPORTER
Lawrence Barretto ext.5887
lawrence.barretto@haymarket.com

FEATURES EDITOR
Scott Mitchell ext.5370
scott.mitchell@haymarket.com

EDITOR AUTOSPORT.COM
Glenn Freeman ext.5309
glenn.freeman@haymarket.com

DEPUTY EDITOR AUTOSPORT.COM
Matt Beer ext.5811
matt.beer@haymarket.com

INTERNATIONAL EDITOR
Mitchell Adam ext.5432
mitchell.adam@haymarket.com

MANAGING EDITOR
Peter Hodges ext.5903
peter.hodges@haymarket.com

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Stuart Codling ext.5835
stuart.codling@haymarket.com

RALLIES EDITOR
David Evans
david.evans@haymarket.com

ART EDITOR
Lynsey Row ext.5914
lynsey.row@haymarket.com

SENIOR DESIGNER
Michael Cavalli ext.5381
michael.cavalli@haymarket.com

PHOTOGRAPHS
LAT Photographic

GROUP PICTURE EDITOR
Peter Mills ext.5918
peter.mills@haymarket.com

AUTOSPORT.COM TECHNICAL TEAM LEADER
Geoff Creighton
geoff.creighton@haymarket.com

AUTOSPORT.COM DEVELOPER
Tomasz Trzadel
tomasz.trzadel@haymarket.com

OFFICE MANAGER
Joanne Grove ext.5804
joanne.grove@haymarket.com

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTORS

| | | |
|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Gary Watkins | Mark Glendenning | Alan Eldridge |
| Henry Hope-Frost | Dieter Rencken | Andrew van Leeuwen |
| Marcus Pye | Gary Anderson | |

CORRESPONDENTS

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| ARGENTINA Tony Matson | ITALY Roberto Chinchero | David Phillips, Robin Miller, Jeremy Shaw |
| AUSTRALIA Phil Branagan | JAPAN Jiro Takahashi, Len Clarke | UK & EIRE Jack Benyon, Jonathan Crawford, Dan Cross, Kerry Dunlop, Leanne Falvy, Paul Healy, Linda Keen, Jamie Klein, Mark Libbeter, Stephen Lickorish, Marc Orme, Graham Read, Hal Ridge, Peter Scherer, Ian Sowman, Oliver Timson, Ian Titchmarsh, Matt Upton, Eddie Walder, Richard Young |
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Gary Lee Hoebeck
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AUTOSPORT.COM SALES MANAGER
Fiona Bain ext.5551
fiona.bain@haymarket.com

AUTOSPORT.COM AGENCY ACCOUNT MANAGER
Jessica McFadyen ext.5820
jessica.mcfadyen@haymarket.com

ONLINE ADVERTISING
Leah Mims ext.5846
leah.mims@haymarket.com

SPECIAL PROJECT SALES
James Robinson ext.5384
james.robinson@haymarket.com

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR
Matthew Witham

LICENSING DIRECTOR
Jim James

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Ailsa Donovan ext.5639
ailsa.donovan@haymarket.com

PRODUCTION CONTROLLER
Abbey Gunner ext.5588
abbey.gunner@haymarket.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS
UK 0844 8488817
OVERSEAS +44 (0)1795 592 974
EMAIL autosport@servizhelpine.co.uk

BACK ISSUES
Tel: 0844 8488817

DIRECT MARKETING EXECUTIVE
Kadie Chanter ext: 5622
kadie.chanter@haymarket.com

LICENSING AND SYNDICATION LICENSING MANAGER
David Ryan ext: 5024

MANAGEMENT

GROUP DIRECTOR
Tim Bulley

GROUP COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR
Ben Guynan

GROUP EDITOR
Anthony Rowlinson

PUBLISHER
Stuart Williams

PUBLISHING MANAGER
Samantha Jemson

SPECIAL EVENTS MANAGER
Laura Coppin

DIGITAL SPECIAL PROJECT MANAGER
Simon Strang ext: 5093
simon.strang@haymarket.com

DIGITAL PRODUCT MANAGER
Simon Grayson, ext: 5346
simon.grayson@haymarket.com

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What you think of the motorsport news of the past week



F1 must heed the warnings

Once again Formula 1 let me down with a problem that I have highlighted before. Yes, we knew Australia was going to be a tortoise-versus-hare event, with Mercedes streaking off into the distance leaving a pack of hounds baying in their slipstream and poor old McLaren plodding along tortoise-like behind, but I never expected 'behind' to be just 15 cars back.

I have long since predicted that we may

be watching the beginning of the end if costs are not brought to an affordable level. I hear guarded threats being made about the future for some teams and I am beginning to wonder if F1 will actually be a viable proposition when Honda finally comes out of its shell. I have a warning for the doubting Thomases though: Honda will get it right and when they do, watch out.

Paul Caldwell, Widnes, Cheshire

Is the ever-increasing

complexity of F1 rules increasing the cost of the sport and reducing its appeal? If it is, then consideration should be given to an extensive rewrite of the rules. I would suggest the following as a starting point:

As a minimum, keep the existing safety and related construction rules; specify the car's maximum dimensions (length, width, height, minimum weight) but not the wheelbase; fuel type – anything from coal to kerosene, including electric; engine – front or rear location, any size, any type: internal combustion, external combustion, electric or hybrid (if hybrid is used then the fuel capacity would be proportionally reduced); transmission – manual or semi-automatic, front or rear-wheel drive; aerodynamics – wings must fit within the car's dimensions, downforce would be limited to a multiple of the car's minimum weight (verified by windtunnel test and/or analysis); power steering

allowed but no ABS or traction control.

Oh, I almost forgot – the driver's choice of helmet design would be free, with no restriction on the number of changes! **Richard Hathaway Uckfield, East Sussex**

Wake up F1 or lose out. With

only one team who can call themselves professional and who will dominate this season as they did last year, the only entertainment for me was Arnie doing the podium interviews.

Thank goodness we did not, like last week's letter writer suggested, have boring old DC droning away doing the interviews. Long may other 'entertainers' like Eddie Jordan or Nelson Piquet do them. **Mike Kelly London SE20**

I have being hoping against the odds that the FIA would come up with a

suitable remedy to the financial situation some teams are facing.

However, they have put all their efforts, using Article 21.1 of the F1 regulations, in ensuring that drivers' helmets remain the same all season. Yet again no fan consultation here. No more Peterson replica (Ericsson at Monaco) or Button's tribute to his father, or Vettel's varied designs.

If the FIA wants to make it easier for fans to recognise drivers, I'd rather they spent a small amount of time ensuring that all the cars have their numbers in easy-to-see places (wing endplates or sidepods) using a dark number on a white disc.

At least then we would be able to recognise the driver without resorting to the race programme to see which blue, white and yellow-helmeted driver is who. **Dennis Tyler, Brentwood, Essex**

BIG NUMBER

13 Ex-F1 racers entered for V8 Stock Car two-driver round at Goiania: Hoffmann, Barrichello, di Grassi, Serra, Zonta, Pizzonia, Senna, Piquet Jr, Villeneuve, Liuzzi, Bernoldi, Burti, Alguersuari.

MILESTONE

Christian Fittipaldi and Joao Barbosa head to Sebring having made a good start to their bid for a second USC title. They're behind only non-regulars Scott Dixon/Kyle Larson in the points.



MARKLAND/GETTY

WHAT'S ON TRACK

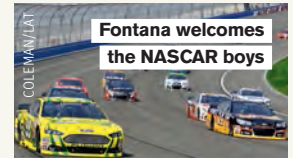


Sportscar classic at Sebring is a tough one

LEVITT/AT

SEBRING 12 HOURS

United SportsCar
Rd 2/10
Sebring, Florida, USA
March 21
imsa.com



COLEMAN/AT

Fontana welcomes the NASCAR boys

NASCAR SPRINT CUP

Rd 5/36
Fontana, California, USA
March 22
nascar.com

V8 STOCK CARS

Rd 1/12
Goiania, Brazil
March 22
stockcar.com.br

MY FAVOURITE DRIVER

Alex Zanardi

The smiling Italian stood out in already-exciting US CART racing, and his humour and dignity after terrible injuries endear him to **MITCHELL ADAM**

FOR THIS LAD IN AUSTRALIA,

Formula 1 wasn't a massively fun watch at times in the late 1990s, in the middle of Sunday nights.

Few races stood out, grooved tyres are best forgotten and, with the internet yet to take charge, exposure to the likes of Michael Schumacher and Mika Hakkinen was generally limited to a post-race press conference at 1am. From those, they hardly seemed the most personable chaps, especially if you'd just spent two hours trying to stay awake.

The more entertaining viewing

generally came 24 hours later, from CART. It featured fast, challenging cars that looked and sounded awesome, visited places like Road America and the runways of a Cleveland airport, produced interesting races and had cool characters behind the wheel.

No-one was cooler than Alex Zanardi.

The Formula 1 refugee grabbed his American lifeline with Chip Ganassi Racing with both hands; three wins in the second half of his rookie season set the scene for titles in 1997 and '98.

During this era, it wasn't just Zanardi's speed that caught the eye. He took risks and generally made them work, like 'The Pass' on Bryan Herta to claim victory on the final lap at Laguna Seca. When he won, which was often, he'd play showman and perform some doughnuts.

He was just as exuberant out of the car. A Zanardi interview was packed with smiles, but also honesty if things didn't go well. Unlike many drivers, he genuinely looked like he was loving every moment of it. This enthusiasm, even through a TV, was contagious.

What should have been a fresh start in Formula 1 with Williams was a disappointment, while his return to CART



...after a stellar career in CART with Chip Ganassi

RONDEAU/GETTY



Zanardi took gold in London Paralympics...

in 2001 was also a slog, until that September afternoon at Germany's Lausitzring.

A race he could have won finished with life-threatening and ultimately life-changing injuries. Since then, though, he's written an inspirational story that has transcended motorsport.

"Unlike many, Zanardi looked like he loved every moment"

In specially-modified vehicles, Zanardi completed those last 13 Lausitzring laps, tested a Formula 1 car with BMW and won races in the World Touring Car Championship.

A new challenge brought a new summit and, after winning a pair of handcycling gold medals in the London 2012 Paralympics, he's back in motorsport, racing GT cars.

For no other reason than because he loves it. ☘

FROM THE SOFA

WHAT'S ON TELEVISION



Post-Humphrey, Perry has tough act to follow

FOX/GETTY

The live F1 TV battle kicks off

"AFTER THE REVOLUTION COMES evolution," said the moody Eddie Jordan voiceover for the evocative pre-show montage raising the curtain on the BBC's Australian Grand Prix show. For UK Formula 1 viewers, it's now three years into the post-revolution world of a Sky/BBC split and limited 'free' live coverage.

Melbourne was sadly a race better suited to a one-hour highlights burst than slogging through every minute live but, with most diehards mostly surely long since paid up to Sky, the BBC's viewership would've contained the stronger percentage of semi-interested passing viewer versus F1 obsessive. Its tone now has to reflect that – not by dumbing down, just by being inclusive. The opening montage ticked that box; its dramatic clips to an ominous classical score and Jordan's tension-building script managed to stoke excitement and tick off most of the big winter storylines sufficiently for someone who hadn't paid any attention to F1 since last November, without anyone who had glued their eyes to AUTOSPORT Live throughout winter testing feeling patronised.

Suzi Perry's and David Coulthard's introductory chat had its blips by comparison ("racing driver's protege" was a curious way to introduce World Rally champion's son Carlos Sainz Jr), and Perry hasn't ever seemed as engaged with F1 as she was with MotoGP, but she

has a tough act to follow. Few F1 anchors have ever achieved the inclusiveness balance as adeptly as the much-missed Jake Humphrey – the presenter your motorsport-fanatic best mate could respect and your casually interested granny could love; the man whose skillset suggested CBBC should be the GP2 of F1 presenting. The spice of the Humphrey/Jordan/Coulthard pitlane-wandering trio worked beautifully, Jordan's excesses mediated by Humphrey's adept handling and Coulthard's simmering rage.

In 2012's head-to-head comparison with Humphrey, Sky's Simon Lazenby came off second best, but with

"Sky's Davidson is a hard benchmark for any analyst"



Lazenby: more-comfortable style

STALEVILAT

experience and paddock familiarity has come a more comfortable style. He now blends in, which is a compliment. His expert sidekicks Damon Hill and Johnny Herbert are too mild and sensible to provide Jordan/Coulthard fireworks, which gives Lazenby less to play with, but he creates his own entertainment – judging correctly when it was safe to joke with Monisha Kaltenborn about now understanding why so many drivers wanted to be in her car as it was clear it was quite good. Lazenby is now in a much more respectable place on a presenter scale that has Humphrey at its peak and Jim Rosenthal anchored to its bottom.

Sky was missing a star player for the opener. Anthony Davidson's Toyota commitments are hefty this year and so Herbert was promoted to practice co-commentary and Skypad duty in his place. Herbert fared well, keeping it coherent and making some decent observations, all delivered with a jaunty style. But Davidson is a hard benchmark for any analyst, with his forensic eye for driving-style detail and masterful ability to translate those nuances for viewers' benefit. If every schools science programme was presented with Davidson-at-the-Skypad skill, GCSE grades would rocket. His return is eagerly awaited. *Matt Beer*

TV pick of

Edited by Matt Beer



SEBRING 12 HOURS - LIVE

Motors TV

Saturday 1430-0305

A bumpy airfield circuit little changed since the 1950s, a massive multi-class United SportsCar field, and an endurance race that starts in the morning and finishes long after sunset. There's always a lot to savour about America's second sportscar classic of the season, the Sebring 12 Hours. Following it from Europe has got easier, too, with Motors TV broadcasting the entire race live this weekend. There's also a three-hour highlights package repeated through the week.



GOODWOOD MEMBERS' MEETING - LIVE

Motors TV

Sunday 1430-1705

There are only limited public tickets for Goodwood's recently added third big meeting of the year (it being a meeting, axiomatically, for members), but Motors TV's live coverage can be your saviour if you're not in Sussex for the wide variety of star names in historic single-seater, tin-top and sportscar races, plus a cracking line-up of demonstration runs with themes including 'high-airbox' 1970s Formula 1 cars, Group C cars and a 20th-anniversary gathering of McLaren F1 GTRs.

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ONLINE

the week



AUSTRALIAN GP REPEAT
Sky Sports F1
Thursday 1830-2100

It's unlikely many motorsport fans missed the Australian Grand Prix amid the annual season-opener fervour, but if you did, or if you want to further analyse any of the usual Melbourne mayhem, or if you just need something to tide you over until Malaysia next weekend, Sky Sports F1 is reshaping the action in various forms through the week. There's an abridged highlight package, full race re-runs, and the F1 Midweek Report news show picking up on some of the early themes of the 2015 season.



FONTANA NASCAR - LIVE
Premier Sports
Sunday 1900-2330

Kyle Busch would be seeking a hat-trick here after his 2013 and '14 wins, but his leg-breaking Daytona crash opens the door for a change of Fontana victor this weekend. Maybe 2014's rookie sensation Kyle Larson, who came close to defeating Busch here last year, will make his breakthrough... Premier Sports takes the US feed directly, so UK fans get the full American cultural experience. Hit mute on the green flag to avoid the superfluous shouts of "boogity!"



BRITISH RALLYCROSS
Eurosport 2
Saturday 1500-1600

The first round of the rejuvenated British Rallycross Championship took place at Croft, where four-time champion Julian Godfrey began his campaign for a record fifth straight crown, against opponents with title-winning pedigrees such as Pat Doran and Ollie O'Donovan, plus Andy Scott - back from the world championship - and European championship event winner Kevin Proctor. Eurosport's highlights package also includes the packed support bill ranging from the brilliant RX150 buggies to Retro Rallycross monsters.



BRAZILIAN GP 2008
Sky Sports F1
Friday 2100-2300

This week's retro selections filling Sky Sports F1's gaps between grands prix are mostly 21st-century offerings, though a Tales from the Vault special on the epic 1984 season on Monday at 2315 is worth a look if you want to peer further back through the mists of time. The 2007 Canadian GP (Saturday, 1430) offers Lewis Hamilton's first win and Robert Kubica's ferocious crash, but the highlight has to be F1's most spine-tingling title decider, the 2008 Brazilian GP in full on Friday night.



GLENN FREEMAN
EDITOR AUTOSPORT.COM

glenn.freeman@haymarket.com
 @glenn_autosport

SEBASTIAN VETTEL COULDN'T believe his ears, but Nico Rosberg had a point. The two Germans shared a chuckle in the Australian Grand Prix post-race press conference, with Vettel expressing disbelief at Rosberg's claim that he hopes Ferrari can close the gap to Mercedes.

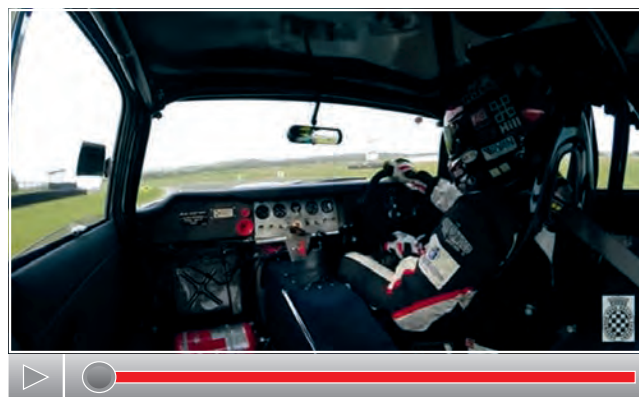
Rosberg claimed he meant it, and if that's true, credit to him. He's seen the bigger picture - one team dominating F1 has the potential to damage the sport, and it could mean fewer people paying attention to Mercedes' remarkable achievements.

We've certainly noticed a trend along these lines on autosport.com - over the four-day Australian GP 'event' (including Thursday's media activities), stories about Mercedes occupied six of the bottom 10 places in terms of number of readers.

In many ways it's not Mercedes fault - it's everyone else's for failing to stay in touch. But it seems that unless the rivalry between its drivers explodes, it's going to be a struggle to make the narrative of Mercedes get the attention it deserves among a sea of negativity elsewhere in F1.
















HOT ON THE WEB THIS WEEK

YouTube HUFF GRABS LIGHTWEIGHT E-TYPE BY THE SCRUFF



SEARCH FOR: Rob Huff testing for 73rd members Meeting
 Former World Touring Car champion and seasoned Goodwood hand Rob Huff takes time out from his day job to get to grips with the legendary lightweight Jaguar E-type CUT 7 in preparation for the 73rd Members' Meeting this weekend.

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HAVE-A-GO HERO

When drivers crop up in unexpected places

McRae adapted well to the Prodrive-run Care Racing Ferrari 550...



ROBERTSON/GETTY

McRae's Le Mans lesson

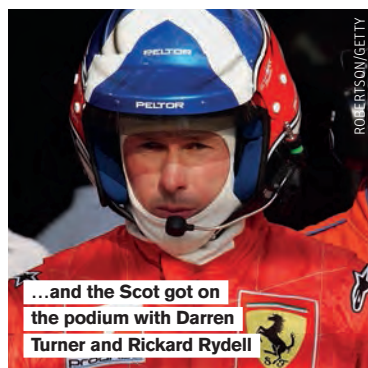
Without a ride in the WRC for 2004, Colin McRae took on the might of the Le Mans 24 Hours in a Ferrari. And the Scot was a fast learner...

Without a drive for the 2004 season, Colin McRae would have been forgiven for preparing for the long holiday called retirement. But anybody who knew the 1995 World Rally champion would tell you he wasn't one for sitting about at home – not when there was still a world of roads he hadn't yet raced on.

For the first time since 1996, McRae saw the new year in without being burdened by a pre-Monte Carlo test followed by an entry on one of his least-favourite rallies.

He went to Africa instead, for his first shot at the Dakar Rally. But his 18-day adventure in a Nissan didn't go to plan, when transmission problems left him stranded in the dunes. He eventually finished 20th. But he'd be back 12 months on to put down a pretty big marker in the sand, battling for the lead until a crash on the sixth stage.

So, what about his summer holiday of 2004? It was France, but



ROBERTSON/GETTY

not the Cote d'Azur for the beach or a walking holiday in the Dordogne. Instead, he headed to Le Mans for the 24 Hours. He'd always wanted a go and now was his chance.

McRae joined Darren Turner and Rickard Rydell aboard a Care Racing Ferrari 550 GTS, and he loved it. Why wouldn't he? Hundreds of horsepower all going through the rear wheels was right up CMac's street. But Le Mans is about

consistency, craft and common sense. Brute force and seat-of-the-pants feeling had no place in the Ferrari, and the Scot adapted beautifully.

He got through practice and qualifying, enjoyed the night driving and loved the buzz as the start drew near. His lap times were close to those of his team-mates and they were consistent. The only minor hiccup for McRae came with a late alarm call that forced him from bed to behind the wheel in a matter of minutes.

He coped admirably with the whole episode and contributed plenty towards a debut GT1-class podium and ninth overall.

His efforts weren't lost on Turner either. Turner says in the book *McRAE just Colin*: "I'd known who Colin was, but I'd never met him before Le Mans. He was a really open person and it wasn't a case of him saying, 'I'm a World Rally champion, I know everything there

is to know about driving a car.'

"Instead, he accepted this was a new challenge and he came to all of us for advice. He adapted really well to it. Every situation that was fired at him, he dealt with it. He wasn't off the pace at all at Le Mans, something like half a second to seven tenths [per lap] down. I think if he'd returned the following year, his pace would have improved a lot. It was a real pleasure to be with him and he helped make 2004 one of my favourite times as Le Mans."

For a man whose previous racing experience had been limited to a damp British Touring Car Championship meeting at Knockhill (where he first noticed how tall Matt Neal was – and how angry he could get...) and a couple of TVR Tuscan outings, McRae acquitted himself brilliantly. And thoroughly enjoyed the first of what would be a few busman's holidays as he eased his way into semi-retirement. **✎ David Evans**

NEXT WEEK SEBRING 12 HOURS

Plus: IndyCar preview; Goodwood action

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